



# Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2

2020 – 2038

Pre-Submission Consultation Draft October 2023



**MELKSHAM**  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
**PLAN**

## Overview Information

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

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

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

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

Melksham Without Parish Council  
[clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk) | Telephone: 01225 705700

Melksham Town Council  
[linda.roberts@melksham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:linda.roberts@melksham-tc.gov.uk) | Telephone: 01225 704187



## Thanks and acknowledgements to:

All those who have contributed considerable time to shape the content of this plan, in particular Steering Group and Task Group members and Town and Parish staff members.

Many of the Plan photographs were provided by Linda De Santiz as well as by members of the Plan Steering Group. Front Cover Aerial Photo: Catherine Fallon Operations. Aerial of Sandridge Solar Farm: Foresight Group.

Ruth Balnave and Phil McMullen for logo design.

Wiltshire Council Spatial Planning Officer, David Way, who has provided invaluable input and time into the preparation of this Plan.

Locality who administered grant funding and gave advice and support

Plan Consultants – [Place Studio](#), together with AECOM

*Map License information where not otherwise stated:*

© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100049050

© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420)

2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

Melksham Town Council PSGA Member Licence: 100055420

Melksham Without Parish Council PSGA Member Licence.: 100056463

# Contents

(if reading this as a pdf on a computer – click on the green text in the contents to jump to that part of the plan)



Foreword	5		
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4 Planning Policies</b>	<b>26</b>
1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?	7	4.1 Index of policies	27
1.2 Reviewing the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP)	8	<b>Sustainable Development and Climate Change</b>	<b>30</b>
1.3 What changes has JMNP2 introduced?	9	Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction	31
1.4 What area does the JMNP relate to and what time period does it cover?	10	Policy 2: Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy	35
1.5 Who has prepared the Neighbourhood Plan?	10	Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management	37
1.6 How does the Neighbourhood Plan represent the community's views?	11	Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging	39
1.7 Navigating the Plan	12	<b>Housing and Infrastructure</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2 Setting the Agenda</b>	<b>13</b>	Policy 5: Pre-application Community Engagement	42
2.1 Why a Joint Neighbourhood Plan?	13	Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements	44
2.2 Neighbourhood Plan Review: updating key issues and evidence	13	<b>Allocations of Land for Housing</b>	<b>47</b>
2.3 Some key facts about the Plan area	15	Policy 7.1: Land at Cooper Tires	50
2.4 The Wider Context	16	Policy 7.2: Land at the Former Melksham Library Site	57
2.5 Draft Local Plan Housing Target and Site Allocations	16	Policy 7.3: Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley	61
2.6 The Approach to the Neighbourhood Plan	17	Policy 7.4: Land at Middle Farm Plot A	65
2.7 Melksham Town Introduction	19	Policy 7.5: Land at Middle Farm Plot B	67
2.8 Melksham Without Introduction	21	Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities	69
2.9 Sustainable Development and Climate Change	22		
<b>3 The Vision and Objectives</b>	<b>24</b>		
3.1 Vision	24		
3.2 Objectives	25		



Shopping, Working and Getting Around	70	Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design	106
Policy 9: Town Centre	71	Policy 21: Local Heritage	109
Policy 10: Employment Sites	75	<b>5 Priority Statements</b>	<b>113</b>
Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel	76	Glossary	116
Community Well-being and Nature	81	Footnotes	120
Policy 12: Green Infrastructure	82	Appendix 1: Community Engagement Protocol	122
Policy 13: Biodiversity	84	Appendix 2: Evidence Base Summary	126
Policy 14: Open Spaces	86		
Policy 15: Community Facilities	88		
Policy 16: Local Green Spaces	93		
Natural and Built Environment	96		
Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows	97		
Policy 18: Landscape Character	101		
Policy 19: Green Wedges	103		



# Foreword



## **THIS IS A DRAFT UPDATED JOINT MELKSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN. YOUR FEEDBACK AND INPUT IS NEEDED!**

The first Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP) 2020 – 2026 was brought into force on 1 July 2021. It is adopted as part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire to be used to guide and decide upon planning applications.

Ongoing and new issues like providing affordable homes in the right places, tackling climate change and helping local businesses recover from the impact of COVID make it imperative that our Neighbourhood Plan evolves to provide strong local powers, alongside Wiltshire’s upcoming new Local Plan that will set out where new homes and jobs will be provided looking ahead to 2038.

To achieve this Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish Councils, and the Steering Group have jointly launched the review of the Neighbourhood Plan to look ahead to 2038. The current Neighbourhood Plan has been updated and added to in order to make sure it remains up-to-date, forward looking and strong.

This is the draft (Regulation 14) consultation version of the second JMNP. Building on all the work that has been done to date, this draft new plan is now at a stage where people who live and work in Melksham and Melksham Without Parish, as well as those who play a role in the future of the town, can give us feedback and input.

We need to hear what you think is good about the updated draft Neighbourhood Plan, what you think needs more work and if you think anything is missing.

All comments will be reviewed and this draft will be appropriately revised to help ensure the Plan is shaped up to reflect the views of the community and stakeholders such as Wiltshire Council.

On the next page we set out the key information that you need to know for the consultation so you can have your say!

## Consultation – key information

Consultation on this draft Plan will run for 7 weeks between 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023.

We will be making sure that people are aware of the consultation through the following ways:

**Local News:** As has been done to date, information and updates will be included in the Melksham News.

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

**Online:** the draft Plan and evidence base reports will be available to view on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Neighbourhood Plan website: [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)

**Hard Copies:**

- at the Town Hall
- at the Parish Council offices on the first floor of the Community Campus
- at the library
- at Spindles Cafe on Top Lane Whitley and Shaw

There will also be face to face events where possible as part of the consultation so people can chat through the Plan with local representatives – please check the website and Melksham Independent News for details.

**Please submit your views to us via our online questionnaire, which you will also find on the Neighbourhood Plan website.**

**Find the questionnaire here:**

[www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)

If you have any questions you can email:

[contact@melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](mailto:contact@melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)

Or call:

- Melksham Without Parish Council – Telephone: 01225 705700
- Melksham Town Council – Telephone: 01225 704187

# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

1.1.1 The Localism Act 2011 provided local communities with the power to produce their own Neighbourhood Plan which will guide future development in their area. Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a right which communities in England can choose to use.

1.1.2 The first JMNP 2020 – 2026 (referred to as ‘the first Plan’) was brought into force on 1 July 2021, when 84% of those voting, said YES to the Plan in a local referendum. It is part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire to be used to guide both those proposing development, and those who consider and decide upon planning applications at Wiltshire Council.

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

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

1.1.4 Melksham, local villages and our rural parish is a great place to live. It has a good range of housing choice, a strong economy, good transport connections, an historic town centre,

green spaces, the new Campus, beautiful countryside and the River Avon. Consequently, it is a focus of much housing development. It is therefore vital that our Neighbourhood Plan maximises its powers to plan and manage growth alongside the Wiltshire Local Plan.

1.1.5 It is important to note that the legislation does not allow Neighbourhood Plans to prevent development. There is a national and regional shortage of housing. Instead, the Plan will help to shape new development, ensuring that local needs and aspirations are taken into account.

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

1.1.7 This update of the JMNP (referred to as JMNP2) has been drawn up with the continued aim of ensuring that the growth of Melksham, and that the opportunities that this provides, are balanced with a clear understanding of the community’s aims and aspirations for the future and the protection of the distinct identity, places and spaces we value locally.



## 1.2 Reviewing the JMNP

1.2.1 There is no set time period within which the first Neighbourhood Plan must be reviewed. But it is imperative that our Plan is kept up to date and strong beyond 2026.

1.2.3 The first Plan was adopted (or 'made' to use the planning term) in 2021. Due to the early stages of the review of the Wiltshire Local Plan, and to avoid conflicts with its emerging spatial strategy, the decision was taken that site allocations for Melksham should be considered in the review of the first Plan once the draft Local Plan Review has reached an appropriately advanced stage. With the Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan published, it is considered this stage has been reached. This reviewed and updated JMNP2 also picks up on a number of other more detailed issues such as the designation of Local Green Spaces not covered in the first Plan.

1.2.4 The review process is similar to making the first Plan. Only when this draft JMNP2 has run through all the required stages of consultation and successfully passed an independent examination and local referendum will it come into force. It will then replace the first Plan. Until this point is reached the first Plan remains the adopted Neighbourhood Plan and its policies will be used.

### 1.2.5 Undertaking the review:

- Extends the effective lifetime of our Neighbourhood Plan to 2038. This aligns our Neighbourhood Plan's policies and lifetime with the period for the new Wiltshire Local Plan, which also looks ahead to 2038. The Local Plan sets strategic policies and new housing and employment growth targets for Wiltshire. It sets out where the majority of new homes and jobs will be provided at Melksham and housing targets for Shaw and Whitley. It is important the two plans are in general conformity with each other.
- Saves and updates the first Plan's adopted policies. It will add stronger evidence so that our plan can continue to protect our economy, environment and community life and deliver on its long term aims. No policy areas have been removed.
- Adds new policies to protect our green spaces and valued countryside that have become high priorities since the first Plan.
- Refreshes and strengthens how the Neighbourhood Plan informs and shapes development and conservation in the town, villages and countryside of the Plan Area.



#### Jargon Alert!

Though we have tried to make this a reader friendly document, planning can be full of unavoidable jargon, so a glossary of key terms is included at the end of the Plan (click for **page 116**). This is followed by a list of all references contained within the footnotes in the Plan (click for **page 120**).

## 1.3 What changes has JMNP2 Introduced?

### 1.3.1 Updated Existing Policies:

- Strengthening Policies 1 and 2, addressing updated climate change and sustainable construction priorities and targets
- Widening Policy 7 to address local housing needs through new site allocations at Melksham and Shaw and Whitley. (together with the Local Plan)
- Reinforcing Policy 9, with a new master plan to support future vitality of the town centre
- Adding local detail to Policy 20: Locally Distinctive and High Quality Design with new Local Design Guidelines and Codes
- Adopting a new local heritage asset list to strengthen heritage Policy 21 to protect locally treasured historic buildings and features.

### 1.3.2 New policies to address housing need and to protect areas of open countryside and green spaces:

- **New Policy 7 Allocation of various sites for housing**
- **New Policy 16 Designating Valued Local Green Spaces**
- **New Policy 19 Green Wedges – to protect the countryside that acts to separate our town and villages.**

### 1.3.3 Updated Priority Statements;

- Update of the first Plan's Priority Statements to take account of changes that have occurred since 2020.

The updates have been informed by consultation, and is based on evidence and research to inform our approach to sustainable development for the Neighbourhood Plan area.



#### What is Sustainable Development?

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

(National Planning Policy Framework 2023)

## 1.4 What area does the Neighbourhood Plan relate to, and what time period does it cover?

1.4.1 The Melksham Neighbourhood Area was formally designated by Wiltshire Council on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014 (amended 8th November 2017) shown in Figure 1.

1.4.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is a joint one prepared by Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council. The Neighbourhood Plan area totals approximately 3,360 hectares (c.8,300 acres) and included 11,363 properties in June 2022.

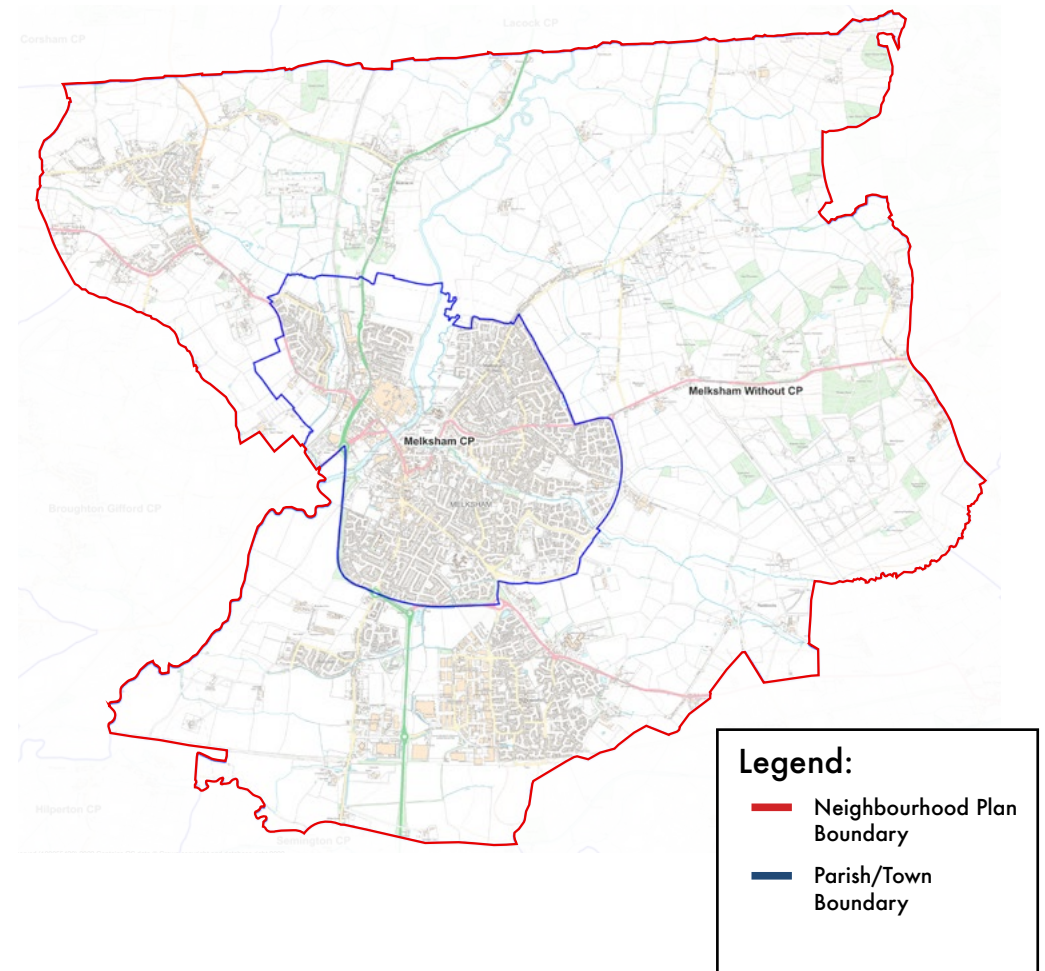
1.4.3 It is an update that will cover the period 2020 – 2038.

## 1.5 Who has prepared the JMNP2?

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

1.5.2 The process of reviewing the first Plan and drafting the Second Plan has been driven by a Steering Group of representatives from councillors representing the town and parish, as well as people from the wider community, with support and guidance from Wiltshire Council and consultants.

Figure 1: Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Area



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420)  
2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023



## 1.6 How does the JMNP2 represent the community's views?

1.6.1 As with the first Plan, the review and making of the second Neighbourhood Plan must have been informed by consultation with the community and stakeholders. How this has been undertaken is detailed in the Consultation Statement which can be found on the Plan website ([www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)).

1.6.2 The draft version of this second Neighbourhood Plan is now published for a period of formal consultation known as Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation. This includes local people, businesses and landowners and many others. It also includes agencies on a list of statutory consultees in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

1.6.3 The consultation will run for 7 weeks between the 16th October and 3rd December.

1.6.4 All comments received during Regulation 14 consultation about this draft second Plan will be carefully considered by the Steering Group. Changes will be made to the Plan and the associated evidence base in response to the feedback, where appropriate and necessary.

1.6.5 The draft Plan, evidence base reports and response questionnaire will be available on the Neighbourhood Plan website: [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)

1.6.6 Following consideration of the Regulation 14 consultation responses and any amendments to the draft plan, it will be formally submitted to Wiltshire Council. The Council then arrange a second public consultation which is also required under the regulations. An Independent Examiner then considers the Plan and the representations received through the consultation and the Plan is modified as recommended by the Examiner and put to a community referendum. If approved at a referendum, the first 2020 – 2026 Plan will be replaced by the updated and second 2020 – 2038 Plan (JMNP2), to become part of the overall development plan for Wiltshire to guide developers, planning officers and Councillors, when considering planning applications in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

1.6.7 The Plan will continue to be actively used, reviewed and monitored to see how it is being used by applicants and Wiltshire Council in relation to planning matters. Future policy contexts, challenges and opportunities, together with community concerns and aspirations will inform future updates.

## 1.7 Navigating the Plan

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

1.7.2 Planning policies form the main focus of this Plan.

1.7.3 The Planning Policies (page 26 onwards), are in five overall sections, related to our plan objectives. We have colour coded each section with the aim of making it easier to follow:

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

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

1.7.5 The policies must be right for the Neighbourhood Plan area and also strong enough to shape responsive and appropriate developments.

1.7.6 Priority Statements (pages 113 onwards) are also included to illustrate the commitment of the two Councils to bring their influence to bear on things we can't address in this Plan, but which are important issues to our local community.

1.7.7 There are a number of separate evidence base reports which underpin the Plan and its policies. They set out detailed information which links to our planning policies and priority statements. The evidence base reports can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website: [www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org)

Please contact the Town or Parish Council for access if you are not online.

# 2 Setting the Agenda to 2038



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

2.1.1 Consultation on the First Neighbourhood Plan as well as the current Wiltshire Core Strategy highlighted the following key issues faced by the two parishes. These remain relevant to planning for Melksham beyond 2026 up to 2038:

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

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

interdependence is further highlighted by the likelihood of future housing growth, much of which is likely to take place in Melksham Without. A single, joint Plan increases the value for the communities of both town and parish.

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

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

## 2.2 Neighbourhood Plan Review: Updating key issues and Evidence

2.2.1 To enable the Second Plan to maintain and update robustly evidenced policies and add new evidence and policies that reflect and respond to community priorities the Steering Group undertook a programme of engagement and technical evidence gathering.

2.2.2 Throughout the spring and summer of 2022, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group undertook a series of



community and stakeholder communication and consultations to build community input into the priority issues that the updated Second Plan should address. This enabled areas of new priority to be raised and focused on updating and adding evidence in the key local issues of:

- Local Housing Needs survey;
- The need and potential for further Neighbourhood Plan Housing Sites Allocations;
- The identification and protection of green spaces and areas of open countryside;
- The identification of valued local heritage assets;
- Understanding the character and design quality of the Neighbourhood Plan area;
- Informing the priorities for future vitality of the Town Centre;
- Updating on Melksham by-pass and Wilts & Berks canal link projects;

A full report of engagement can be read in the Consultation Statement that accompanies this draft Plan.

2.2.3 Throughout 2022 and early 2023, further technical analysis has been undertaken to understand changing circumstances and context relating to:

- Baseline Evidence
- Initial review of changes in National and Strategic Policy affecting the Neighbourhood Plan
- A review of planning proposals and the use of the first Neighbourhood Plan
- Changes and advances in sustainable development and renewable energy best practice and local policy
- Local Housing Needs data assessment
- Available development site assessments
- Local Green Space designation assessments
- Important Rural Green Gap surveys and assessments
- Assessments of potential Non-designated Heritage Assets
- Town Centre master plan Study and Report
- Design Guidelines and Codes for Melksham and Melksham Without

A record of technical evidence gathered can be referenced within Papers and Evidence Base Reports that support this Plan.



### Maps and Evidence Base Reports

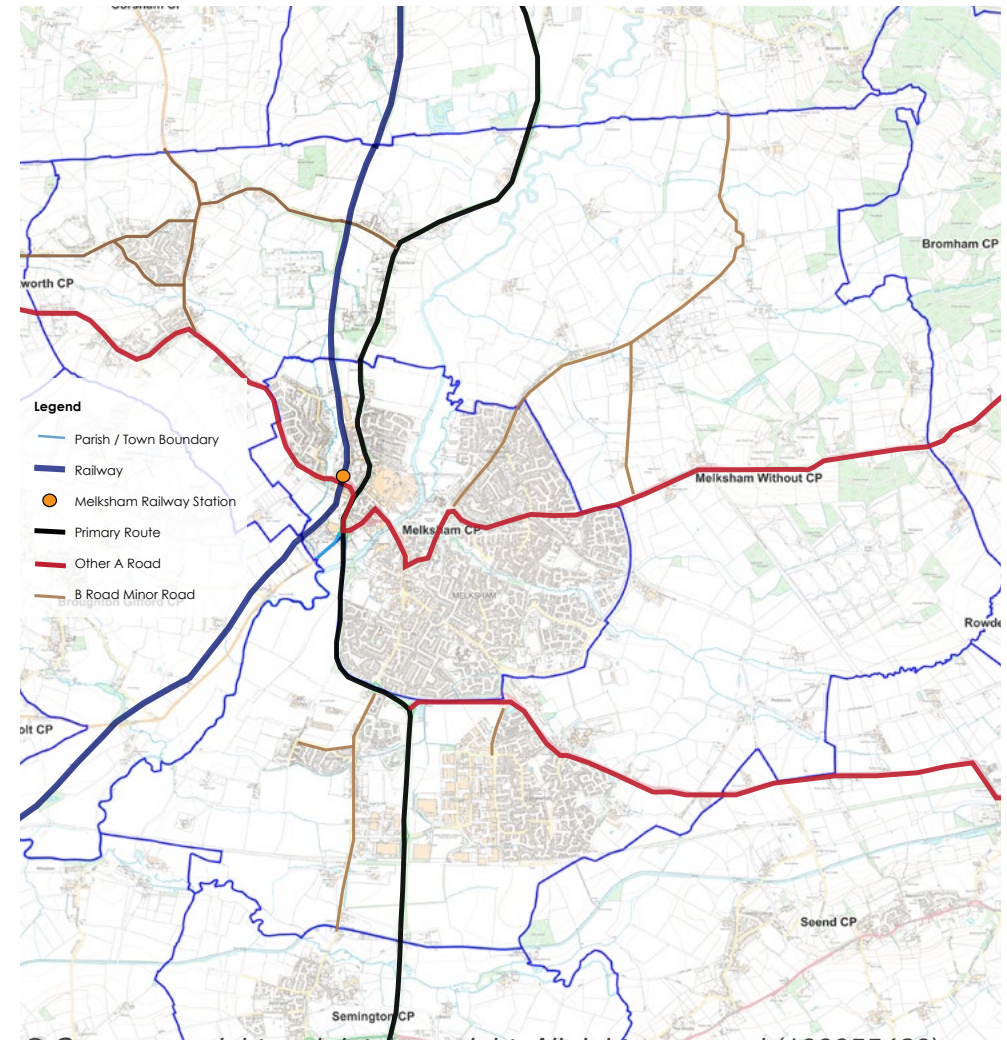
All maps and evidence base reports referenced in the Plan are also available on [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org) as individual files

## 2.3 Key facts about the Neighbourhood Plan area

2.3.1 The facts, figures and studies that make up the Plan evidence base have helped to build up a picture of the Neighbourhood Plan area today, and what may be needed in the future.

- The total resident population of the Neighbourhood Plan area (Melksham Town and Melksham Without) in 2021 was estimated to be 25,300 an increase of 15.4% since 2011 when the population was 21,907<sup>1</sup>.
- There are lower than national averages of people between the ages of 15-44. The predominant age band was '50 to 54' closely followed by '55-60' which is a little above the national average and our population is ageing<sup>2</sup>.
- The Employment Land Review noted that total jobs have grown by 16.6% since 2009<sup>3</sup> with a high concentration of jobs in manufacturing.
- We have a well qualified resident work force. However, there are differences between average earnings by workplace and average earnings by residence in Wiltshire, suggesting that Wiltshire's higher skilled resident workers commute outside of the county for work.
- We have a railway station, but public transport generally is limited in the area, and the area around the station is in need of investment and improvement.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is strategically located on the A350 between Chippenham and Trowbridge. There is also a proposal for a bypass which will change the demand for services and working practices.

Figure 2: Rail and Key Roads Routes



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

## 2.4 The wider context

2.4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last updated in September 2023 and together with Planning Guidance covers most forms of development and sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social priorities for planning in England. Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to and be in general conformity with principles and policies in the NPPF.

2.4.2 Neighbourhood Plans are also required to be in 'general conformity' with the adopted policies of the strategic plan. In Wiltshire, our current Local Plan is the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS), adopted in 2015. The Government requires every Local Plan to be reviewed at least once every five years. Wiltshire's Local Plan, the Wiltshire Core Strategy, was adopted in 2015, and is therefore being reviewed. The emerging Local Plan will replace the Core Strategy when it is adopted. The Steering Group have held regular meetings with Wiltshire Council to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies are updated in line with the emerging policies in the Wiltshire Local Plan Review.

2.4.3 The draft Local Plan is currently at the stage of the final public pre-submission consultation, running until Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023. It will be submitted for examination in 2024 and Wiltshire Council expect adoption at the end of 2024.

2.4.5 The draft Local Plan Review provides an indicative target for future development of homes, employment space and community infrastructure for Melksham and Bowerhill and a separate figure

for Shaw and Whitley up to 2038. That figure will be delivered through both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2.5 Draft Local Plan Housing Target and Site Allocations

2.5.1 Wiltshire Council draft Local Plan has identified a revised housing target figure of 1,170 for Melksham and 73 in Shaw and Whitley to be delivered by 2038. It has also identified strategic site allocations to the north-east and south-east of Melksham. It will not be identifying sites for allocation at Shaw and Whitley.

2.5.2 The Local Plan suggests that land for a further 200 dwellings at Melksham should be delivered through housing site allocations made by the review of the Neighbourhood Plan and after planning permissions and the JMNP 1 allocation is taken into account, a reduced "residual" target of about 50 dwellings in Whitley and Shaw.

2.5.3 The Neighbourhood Plan is aiming to meet many of the required housing numbers through brownfield allocation. For more detail on the approach to housing allocation, **turn to page 47**.



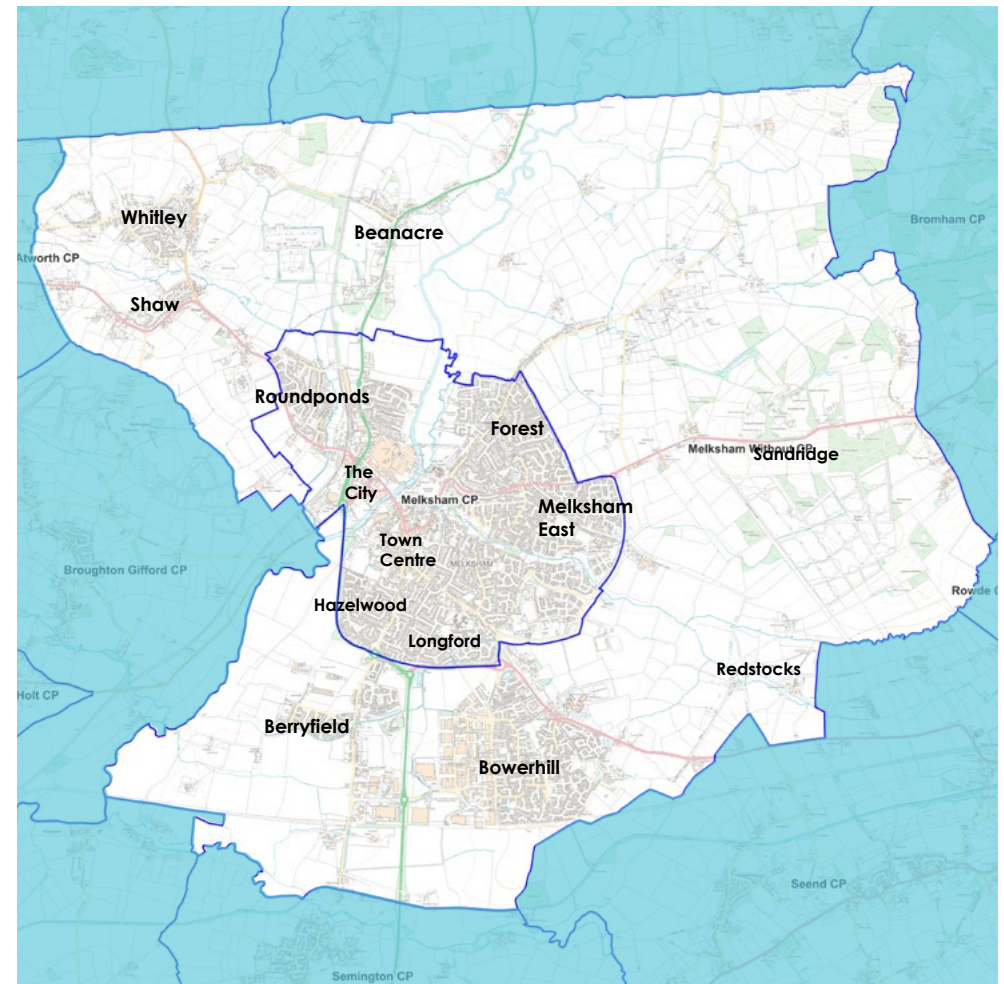
## 2.6 The approach to the Neighbourhood Plan

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

2.6.2 This is particularly relevant to the JMNP2 because Wiltshire Council is set to allocate some development to Melksham in their Local Plan review. Working in partnership with Wiltshire Council has been essential in the formulation of the Plan.

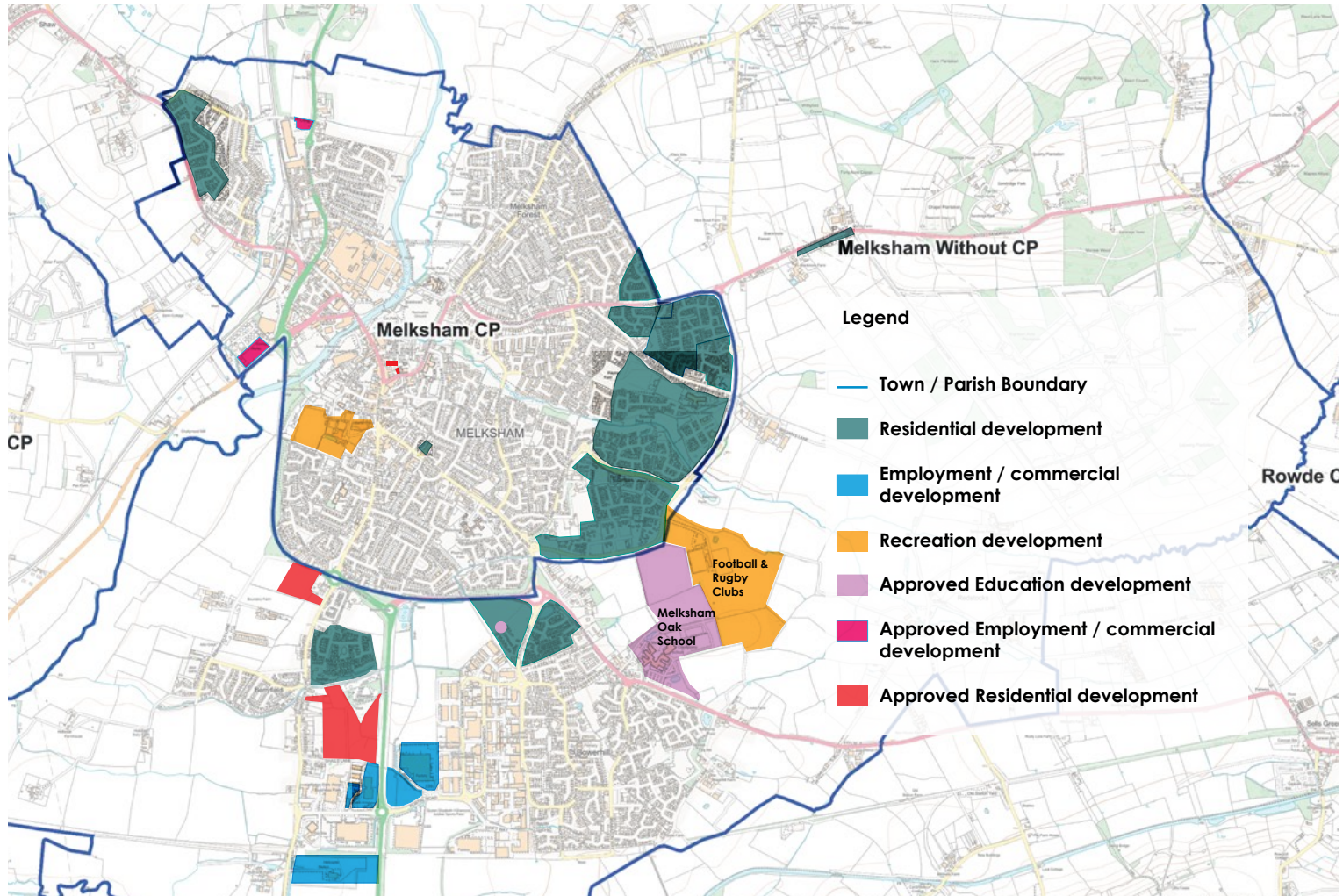
2.6.3 Although there is no requirement to allocate housing in this Neighbourhood Plan, there is ongoing development pressure in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and as set out earlier, there is a target figure set out in the Local Plan. The Steering Group therefore felt it important to review potential development sites in the Plan area with a particular focus on what community benefit development could offer. Landowners submitted potential land for development and more than 100 sites have been independently assessed, some emerging as potentially suitable and some as unsuitable (see the Housing Evidence Base Report available on the Neighbourhood Plan website). All this information has given us an informed evidence base from which to make an informed and proactive approach to development in our Neighbourhood Plan area.

Figure 3: Neighbourhood Plan Area Settlements and Neighbourhoods



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420)  
2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

Figure 4: Major planning permissions granted during the current Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2015) period (at August 2023)



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023



## 2.7 Melksham Town Introduction

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

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

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

2.7.4 The streets around the river Avon and up to the Market Place were the sites of small industries. Independent weavers worked at home in their cottages. Other local trades and crafts typical of a small market town, including tanners, blacksmiths

and millers, occupied small workshops and legacies of the town's industrial past can be seen in the weavers' cottages in Canon Square and the two round houses, originally used for drying cloth.

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

2.7.6 In 1889 the Avon Rubber Company moved to Melksham, occupying a disused cloth mill. Originally to provide materials for the railway industry, by the end of the 19th century, Avon Rubber was focused on pneumatic tyres, as well as milking machine tubes. Rapidly expanding during the 50s and 60s it changed to an international group of companies. In 1997 Avon Tyres was sold to Cooper Tires with the factory sadly closing in December 2023, but other divisions of Avon are still in Melksham. Melksham continues to serve as an employment, facilities, service and retail hub for the greater Melksham community.

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

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



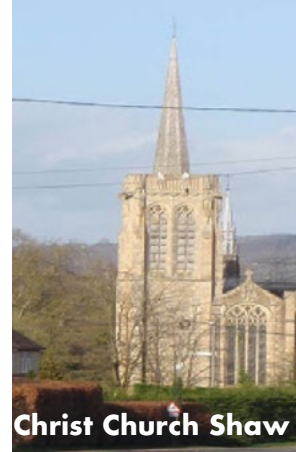
**Church Walk, Melksham**



**Blenheim Park Bowerhill**



**War Memorial**



**Christ Church Shaw**



**Methodist Church Whitley**



**Berryfield**



**St Barnabas Church, Beanacre**



**Melksham Town Hall**



## 2.8 Melksham Without Introduction

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

2.8.2 Melksham Without surrounds the town of Melksham on three sides – the northern, eastern and southern. In the past, the three villages in the north – Beanacre, Shaw and Whitley – were ancient centres of population. Whitley is mentioned in the Domesday book. The eastern parts of the parish, bounded by the River Avon to the west and the Semington Brook to the south, were part of the royal forest of Melksham whose bounds were first set in 1228.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.9 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

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

2.9.2 Recent reports<sup>4</sup> illustrate how urgent it is that action is taken. Extreme weather events have been seen around the world, and now there is incontrovertible evidence that human activity has raised and continues to raise the risk of extreme weather

2.9.3 In the summer of 2019, the 2008 Climate Change Act was amended, committing the UK to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. As a result, changes or additions to national planning policy, building regulations and other policy areas are in flux.

2.9.4 In July 2019, Wiltshire Council made a resolution to seek to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. Wiltshire Council's Environment Select Committee established a task group of councillors and officers to look at some of the main issues, including planning. The Wiltshire Local Plan review builds on this work and strengthens its approach to both sustainable development and climate change in planning.

2.9.5 Both the Town and Parish Council are proactively addressing the need to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

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

2.9.7 As part of its effort to support Wiltshire Council's July 2019 resolution, Melksham Without Parish Council have decided to install drinking water fountains in various public open spaces within the parish, such as Bowerhill and Shaw Playing Fields, to help reduce the single use of plastic water bottles. With climate change and more regular periods of hot weather this will provide somewhere for people to get fresh drinking water.

2.9.8 The Parish Council also encourage, where appropriate, the planting of trees to combat climate change and help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, by signing up to the Tree Charter ([www.treecharter.uk](http://www.treecharter.uk)). They have also worked with volunteers to plant hundreds of trees supplied by the Woodland Trust. The community in Shaw and Whitley to plan to plant their own trees too. The Town Council have regularly organised community tree planting schemes where residents of Melksham can obtain free trees for planting in their gardens. This year another intensive residents tree planting scheme has been planned for November 2023.

2.9.9 All the objectives and policies in the Plan support sustainable development and a number of specific objectives and policies regarding this topic are highlighted in their own section.

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

- Promoting green, environmentally sustainable building standards – **Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction**
- Supporting the installation of electric (or other ultra-low emission) vehicle charging points – **Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles**
- Supporting a vibrant town centre so that people can shop locally – **Policy 9: Town Centre**
- Supporting local employment opportunities to reduce the need for out-commuting – **Policy 10 Employment Sites**
- Giving proper consideration to routes for buses, cyclists, footpaths and green/blue infrastructure in our housing developments – **Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**
- Protecting or promoting a network of biodiverse green spaces and green corridors, conserving established trees and

hedgerows – **Policy 12: Green Infrastructure** and **Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows**





# 3 The Vision and Objectives



## 3.1 The Vision

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

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

Through this Plan the benefit of being located within the A350 employment growth area will be enhanced by the attractive offer of a high quality built and natural environment. As well as the necessary housing and employment growth, we want to see community, health and education provision keep pace with the needs and aspirations of our communities.

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

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

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

## 3.2 Objectives

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

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

1. Reducing carbon emissions to contribute to carbon neutrality in Wiltshire by 2030 and beyond.
2. Planning for new development that addresses the impact of climate change.
3. Encouraging and promoting the use of sustainable technologies and renewable energy.

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

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

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

7. Protecting and enhancing the vitality of Melksham town centre.
8. The retention, regeneration and intensified use of previously developed employment land.
9. Supporting improved transport infrastructure for the increasing Neighbourhood Plan Area population.
10. Encouraging cycling and walking and journeys by rail and bus to reduce the need to travel by car.

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

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

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

14. Protecting settlements' rural setting and countryside gaps between Melksham, Bowerhill and surrounding villages.
15. Conserving and enhancing the quality of the natural landscape.
16. Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to our built heritage and the character of the area, with high standards of design.



Riverside Walk



# 4 Planning Policies

The planning policies are presented in five overall sections, related to the Plan objectives.

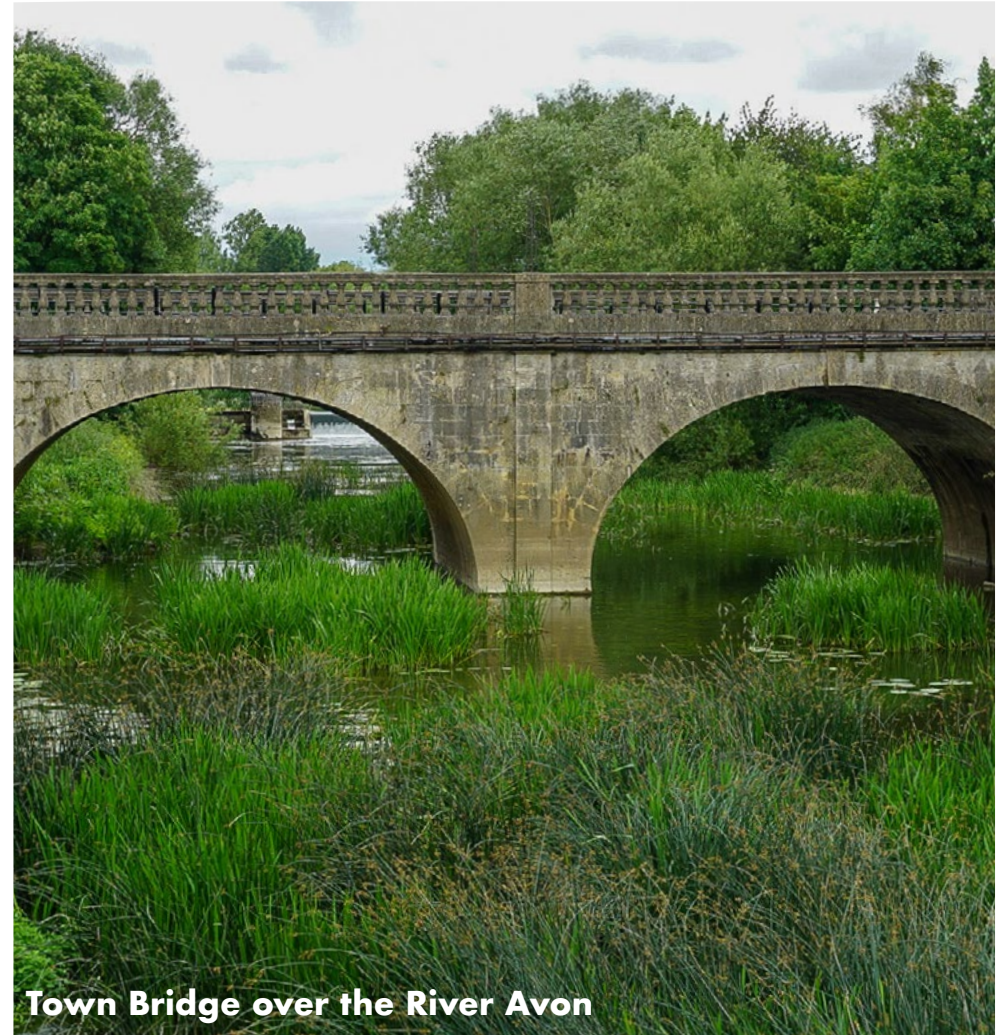
For each policy there is one or more objective, then the policy itself in coloured boxes, and then the key reasons behind the policy.



## What is a Planning Policy?

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

(Neighbourhood Planning Practice Guidance 2019).



**Town Bridge over the River Avon**

## 4.1 Index of Policies

### Sustainable development and climate change

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

### Housing and infrastructure needs

- Policy 5: Pre-application Community Engagement
- Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements
- Policy 7.1 : Land at Cooper Tires
- Policy 7.2: Land at the Former Melksham Library Site
- Policy 7.3: Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley
- Policy 7.4: Land at Middle Farm Plot A
- Policy 7.5: Land at Middle Farm Plot B
- Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

### Shopping, working and getting around

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

### Community well-being and nature

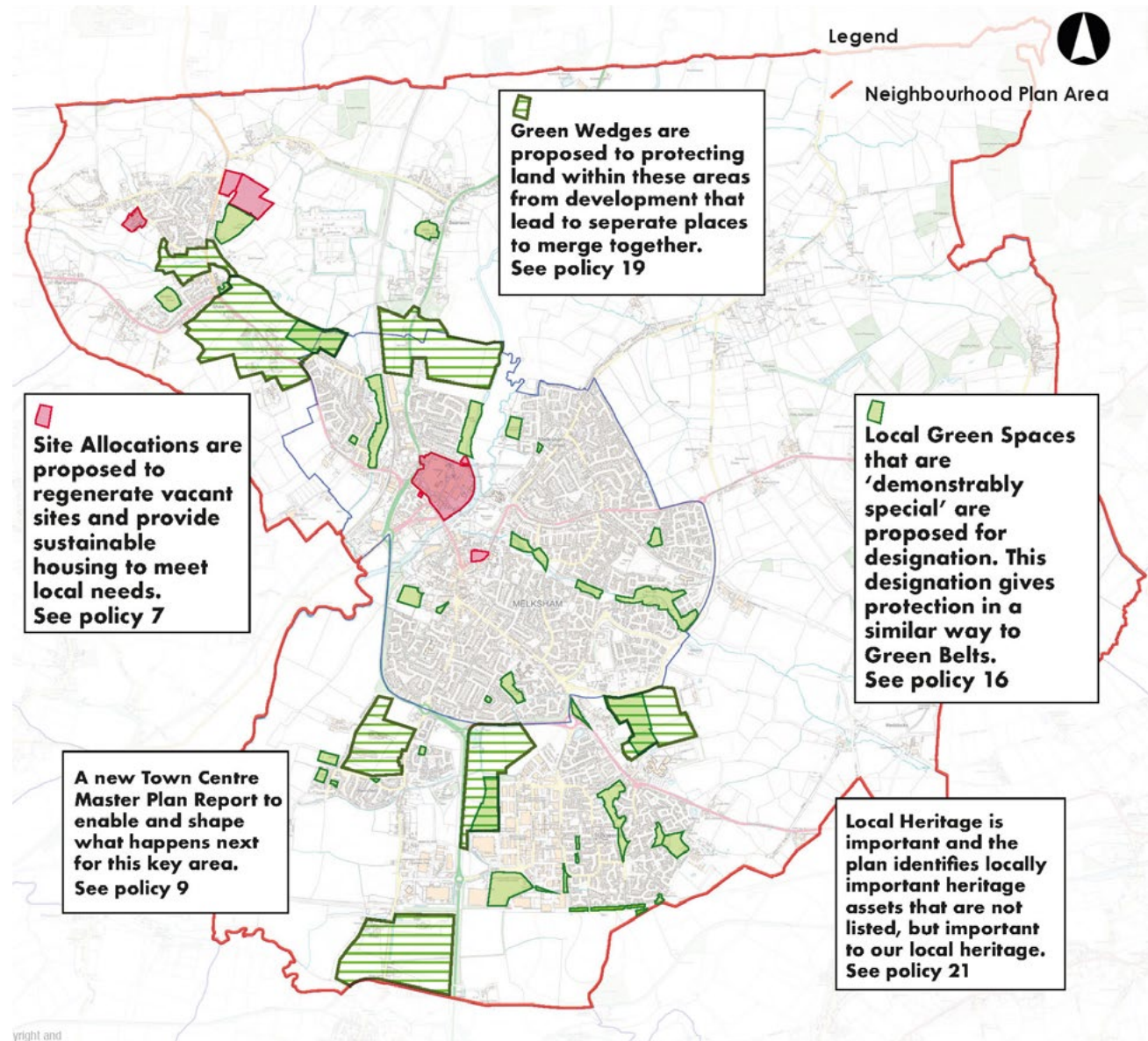
- Policy 12: Green Infrastructure
- Policy 13: Biodiversity
- Policy 14: Open Spaces
- Policy 15: Community Facilities
- Policy 16: Local Green Spaces

### Built and natural environment

- Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows
- Policy 18: Landscape Character
- Policy 19: Green Wedges
- Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design
- Policy 21: Local Heritage



Figure 5: Strategy Overview



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023



# Sustainable Development and Climate Change



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

## **Policies in this section:**

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



### Sustainable Design and Construction

**This policy helps meet objective 1:** Reducing carbon emissions to contribute to carbon neutrality in Wiltshire by 2030 and beyond.  
**...and objective 2:** Planning for new development that addresses the impact of climate change.

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

New development schemes that demonstrate how carbon emissions are minimised, with the target of zero-carbon in operation, and how the impacts of climate change impacts are mitigated and adapted to, will be supported. This includes:

- a. demonstrating good connections to existing services and facilities, and/or a mix of uses that minimises the need to travel by private vehicle;
- b. maximising green and blue infrastructure to sequester carbon and provide other benefits such as shade;
- c. embedding the Energy Hierarchy within the design of buildings by prioritising fabric first, orientation and landscaping, in order to minimise energy demand for heating, lighting and cooling. All proposals should consider opportunities to provide solar PV and energy storage
- d. residential buildings that, within the constraints of viability, demonstrate how heat and power demands are minimised through three elements of energy metrics, targeting:
  1. space heating demand of less than 30KWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year;
  2. total energy consumption less than 40kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum;
  3. provision of enough renewable energy output to match the total energy use.
- e. use of appropriate sustainability assessment tools, such as the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), Home Quality Mark for residential development and/or CEEQUAL (or equivalents) for infrastructure development. All major development should set out how embodied carbon in materials has been minimised;
- f. commercial development that achieves BREEAM 'Excellent' certification or equivalent certification;
- g. the retention of existing buildings where possible and retrofitting measures to improve the energy performance of existing buildings (where planning permission is required). Where this relates to designated and non-designated heritage assets appropriate sensitive approaches and materials must be used in order to maintain the significance of heritage assets through the application of established best practice.

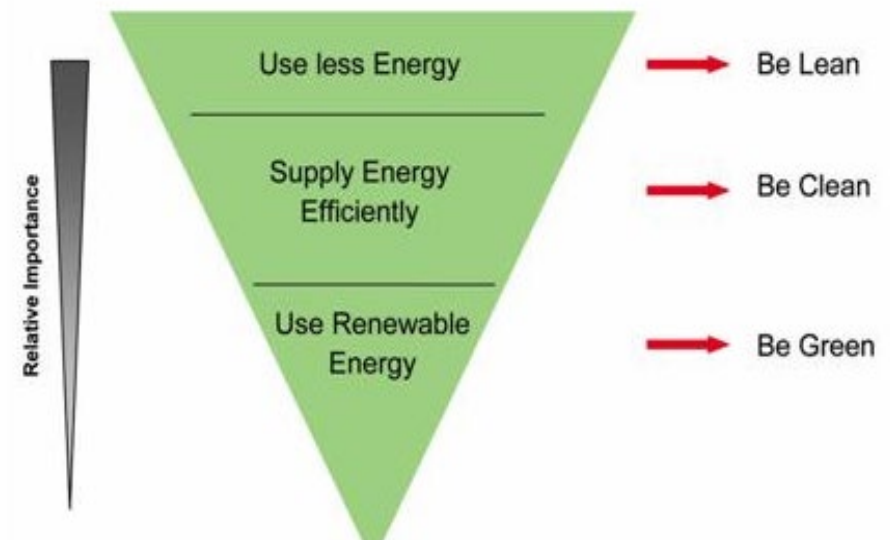
## The reason for the policy

4.2.1 The challenge of climate change can be viewed in terms of both mitigating and adapting. Mitigation is required to reduce the amount of carbon released. Adaptation is also required and associated with becoming more resilient against the impacts of climate change, for example making sure that buildings are designed to avoid overheating.

4.2.2 Since our first Plan, the context for the policy has quickly changed. Published in early 2022, the Wiltshire 2022-2027 Climate Strategy sets out the next five years of the council's journey to becoming a carbon neutral county, contributing towards the legally binding target of net zero carbon for the UK by 2050. The Wiltshire Local Plan Review also updates how the local level of planning policy addresses the challenge of climate change looking ahead to 2038. Policy 4 in the draft Local Plan sets the context for a number of policies which seek to address the broad range of issues relevant for tackling climate change. This, in turn, sets the context for ambitious policies in the JMNP to address adaptation and mitigation of climate change through our very local level planning policies as well as through community action.

4.2.3 The energy hierarchy is a core principle for this policy which means improving building materials, energy efficiency and minimising space heating requirements, before installing renewable energy and then offsetting residual energy if required. It continues

Below: Energy hierarchy diagram (source [designingbuildings.co.uk](https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk))



to acknowledge the importance of a holistic approach to meeting the urgent aim of lowering carbon emissions. It is recognised that a range of factors in the built environment needs to be considered, including how we design and lay out places that incorporate nature and making it easier to get around without the car.

4.2.4 [The Net-Zero Toolkit](#) (Levitt Bernstein, Elementa, Passivhaus Trust and Etude commissioned by West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils, funded by the LGA Housing Advisers Programme 2021<sup>5</sup>) has been created to make Net Zero carbon new build and retrofit more accessible. It has been created for building professionals (developers, contractors, architects and engineers) and is also relevant to self-builders, planning officers and other housing professionals. The guide recommends operational targets for new homes and retrofitting existing homes, which are consistent with the [LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide](#)<sup>6</sup>. It outlines that energy use targets for space heating, and total energy consumption are more transparent and robust than carbon reduction targets and are the best way to ensure zero carbon is delivered in practice.

4.2.5 In their report, 'UK Housing: Fit for the Future?'<sup>6</sup> the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) warns: "We will not meet our targets for emissions reduction without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock. Energy use in homes accounts for about 14% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions need to fall by at least 24% by 2030 from 1990 levels, but are currently off track... The technology exists to deliver homes that are low-carbon, energy efficient and climate-resilient... The costs are not prohibitive, and getting design right from the outset is vastly cheaper and more feasible than having to retrofit later." The

Net Zero Toolkit indicates that a net zero home can be delivered for a cost increase of 2-6% over Part L Building Regulations 2021.

4.2.6 Innovation in energy and construction technologies is fast-moving, but there are skills and costs considerations that need to be taken into account. In our Plan area we want to see buildings that are responsive to climate change and as energy efficient as possible, placing a lower burden on energy supply and generate renewable energy, as well as keeping down domestic energy bills and commercial overheads. In support of Policy 1 we encourage developers to use these best practice toolkits/design guides and buildings standards to enable the best possible climate responsive design.

4.2.7 This policy also relates to existing buildings which may be retrofitted to improve energy efficiency. For heritage assets, established best practice in the form of technical guidance including climate change adaptation, retrofit and energy efficiency advice is offered by Historic England<sup>7</sup>.



## Towards Net Zero

Flowing from the best practice Design Guides and toolkits, we have seen an increase in Plans incorporating ambitious and pioneering policies which introduce operational energy targets for new buildings to demonstrate net zero carbon development. Research for this policy has included review of Local Planning Authority approaches, notably the Cornwall Council Climate Emergency DPD and the accompanying viability assessment, which set out the need for some flexibility in policy requirements for energy use targets as identified in the Net Zero Toolkit.

Wiltshire Council also include a policy on Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy (policy 85) in the Local Plan Review, which also proposes to the use of operational targets. The policy sets out an expectation that new dwellings will demonstrate the following operational standards:

- space heating demand less than 30kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum;
- total energy use less than 40kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum;
- on site renewable energy generation to match the total energy use...

Policy 1 also references the use of standards to demonstrate that buildings are built to high environmental standards:

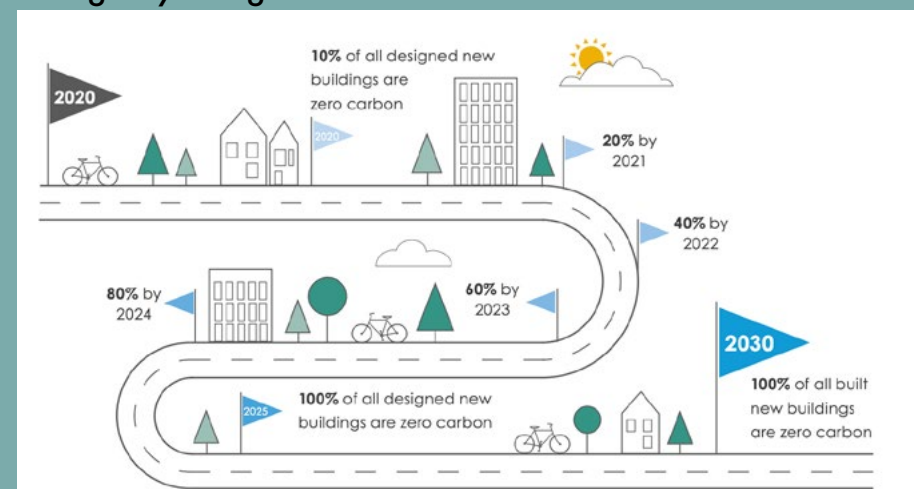
The Home Quality Mark (HQM) helps house builders to demonstrate the high quality of their homes. It gives householders

the confidence that the new homes are well designed and built, and cost effective to run.

BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is a sustainability assessment method that is used to masterplan projects, infrastructure and buildings.

Other standards include Passivhaus or AECB Building Standard and will also be supported. Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating and cooling.

*Below: Getting to zero diagram from the Leti Climate Emergency Design Guide*



### Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

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

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

#### **Policy 2: Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy**

**1. Proposals for renewable energy, low carbon energy generation projects/developments, will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:**

- a. the siting and scale of the proposal is appropriate to its setting;
- b. the proposal will not result in adverse impacts on the local environment which cannot be satisfactorily mitigated;
- c. the proposal does not create an unacceptable impact on local amenity and safety;
- d. the proposal does not have an unacceptable degree of impact on a feature of heritage, natural or biodiversity importance. Proposals for stand alone, ground mounted solar photovoltaic development will be expected to demonstrate that some form of agricultural activity will continue, and/or there are biodiversity improvements around arrays; and,
- e. there are direct benefits to the local community.

**Proposals for community energy generation projects, where there is full or partial ownership and/or control by a local community, will be strongly supported.**

**2. Schemes where the energy produced can be used on or near the generation site/where energy storage is incorporated will be supported. Proposals for energy storage will be supported, where it meets one or more of the following:**

- a. it is located on or near, existing or proposed renewable energy generation sites;
- b. it alleviates grid constraints; and
- c. it enables the delivery of further renewable developments.

### The reason for the policy

4.3.1 The NPPF states that local planning authorities “should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy” (NPPF paragraph 152). As part of moving towards a low carbon future in a changing climate, this Plan supports generation of zero or low carbon energy at the local level from sources such as hydro-electricity, geothermal, biomass or solar energy, particularly where it enables communities to take a more active role in the production of renewable and low carbon local energy.

4.3.2 Community energy refers to the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through a partnership with commercial or public sector partners. Community Energy England, for example, estimates that over 65,000 tonnes of carbon savings were made in 2019 from the generation of renewable energy by community-owned projects.

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

### Community Energy generation in Wiltshire

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



#### Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Renewable energy is energy that is collected from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight and wind as well as plant and animal matter. Another example, heat pumps draw heat from the ground, air or river and use an electric pump to raise the temperature for use in heating.

Though low carbon energy emits some carbon, levels of emissions are much lower than from burning fossil fuels. Greater precision is required in designing and installing low carbon heating systems.

# Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

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

## Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

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

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

**All development should demonstrate how flood risk is mitigated. This may include provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), where appropriate as part of the Natural Flood Management approach and wider Green Infrastructure networking.**

## The reason for the policy

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

4.4.2 One of the major impacts of a changing climate is an increased risk of flooding and this is a significant issue for parts of the north west and south east of Melksham. The UK Met Office predicts that in a business-as-usual scenario, Britain could experience a decrease in summer rainfall by up to 47%, and up to 35% more rain in winter by 2070. This flood risk is exacerbated by the many drainage streams from the north of Whitley that outfeed in the First Lane area. The UK's winter floods of 2013-14 severely affected parts of the Plan area. There were also two additional incidents of 1 in 150 year storms, in August 2012 and September 2014. Since 2014 there have been further flooding incidents, most recently in January 2023. A local response to the issue of flooding is to recruit and train local residents as flood wardens for ongoing monitoring and immediate response.

4.4.3 Any development has the potential to worsen surface water flooding. Paragraph 157 of the NPPF, sets out that new development should make use of opportunities to reduce the causes



and impacts of flooding, where appropriate through the use of natural flood management techniques

4.4.4 This is an important issue recognised at national level. The National Design Guide (2019), includes guidance on integrated water management that enhances the character of a place and makes it more resilient. The National Model Design Code includes guidance on water and drainage, setting out the expectation that schemes should integrate sustainable drainage systems into the early stages of design to reduce flood risk and improve water quality, biodiversity and amenity.

4.4.5 The NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance<sup>8</sup> together with the current and draft Local Plan (Policy 4 – Addressing Climate Change :section c and Policy 95 – Flood Risk) highlight the importance of development taking place in areas at least risk of flooding where possible, as well as the need to manage flood risk associated with more extreme weather events.

4.4.6 The Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (July 2023) which has been prepared as part of this updated Plan, includes a section which addresses water management (DC03.11), which sets out the importance of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and includes a number of ‘overarching principles’ that could be applied in development to mitigate against the important issue of flood

risk – right across our communities and especially in the areas with known surface water flooding issues.



### South Brook

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

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

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

### Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.5.1 The need to drive private vehicles enables people to carry out their everyday business. However, facilitating the transition to low, or zero emission vehicles is key to lowering our carbon emissions, so increases in the availability of charging technology are welcomed and reflects a national drive towards Ultra Low Emission Vehicles.

4.5.2 The government currently plans to end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans in 2035<sup>9</sup>. This reflects the Independent Committee on Climate Change's advice on what is needed in order for the UK to meet its climate change commitments by 2050. The government's Road to Zero Strategy (2018)<sup>10</sup> outlines a number of ambitious measures including:

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

4.5.3 Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles are also considered to have the potential to play a significant role in decarbonising road transport, transitioning to vehicles that produce no harmful tailpipe emissions. As part of the commitment to enabling more Ultra Low Emission vehicles, the Town and Parish Council will be working with partners to deliver locations for charging at various sites across the Plan area.

4.5.4 It is also acknowledged that reducing tailpipe emissions does not eliminate pollution as tyre and brake wear (which is worse in heavier cars) still represents a problem. Therefore, measures to reduce or remedy this source of pollution will be supported



### Ultra Low Emission Vehicles

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

- uses low carbon technologies
- emits less than 75g of CO<sub>2</sub>/km from the tailpipe
- is capable of operating in zero tailpipe emission mode for a range of at least ten miles.

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

4.5.5 Improvements to the Melksham railway station (see page 78 for more detail) have provided some initial electric car charging points in the car park. Plans to increase the provision to six charging points as the demand increases have been developed and are supported by the two councils. This both encourages electric car use, and use of the train, typically when commuting or shopping.





# Housing and Infrastructure



**“It’s vital that the Neighbourhood Plan supports diverse development that suits the needs of the community...which delivers real benefits for the local area”**

## **Policies in this section:**

Policy 5: Community Engagement

Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements

Policy 7.1: Land at Cooper Tires Factory Site

Policy 7.2: Land at the Former Melksham Library Site

Policy 7.3: Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley

Policy 7.4: Land at Middle Farm (Plot A), Corsham Road, Whitley

Policy 7.5: Land at Middle Farm (Plot B), Corsham Road, Whitley

Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities



### Community Engagement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.6.3 Early discussion between applicants and the local community, as well as with the Local Planning Authority, from the earliest stages enables a more collaborative approach to the process of preparing a development proposal that will need to balance many factors as the design evolves *“Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective*

*engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.” (NPPF paragraph 128).*

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

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

4.6.5 The above policy and the Community Engagement Protocol (see Appendix 1, **page 122**) are intended to facilitate a structured approach to enable effective involvement of the local community in outline and full planning applications addressing all aspects of a proposal, from design and layout to issues on climate change and energy generation.

4.6.6 Although applicants cannot be required, only encouraged, to undertake early stage community involvement, putting in place a coherent and consistent approach, in the form of the Protocol, is a key way to deliver this mutual benefit. The nature and scale of engagement should be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.



### Housing Development

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

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

**Proposals for sustainable housing development within the settlements of the Neighbourhood Area will be supported where they accord with the Settlement Boundary provisions of Wiltshire Local Plan Policy 1 and adopted site allocations.**

**New housing will be supported where proposals demonstrate how housing types and tenures have responded positively to meeting local needs, informed by the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Area Housing Needs Assessment (2023).**

**In Melksham Town, new housing will prioritise delivering a balanced mix, of two, three and four bedroom dwellings and bungalows.**

**In Shaw and Whitley, new housing will increase the proportion of smaller two and three bedroom dwellings, to address a shortfall in their availability.**

**To meet the needs of an increasing population of**

**older and disabled people, 50% of new housing will meet accessible home standards. Proposals for age restricted housing, extra-care communities and nursing homes will be supported only in the most sustainable locations, closely linked to local services and public transport.**

**At least 40% of new housing will be provided as affordable housing tenures in conformity with Wiltshire Local Plan policy 76.**

**To address particular local issues of affordability and demand for affordable homes for first time buyers and local households on below average incomes, about 55% of affordable housing should be provided as discounted market affordable housing products, including shared ownership and First Homes products.**

**25% of all affordable housing provision will be First Homes housing, provided at a 40% discount to address local issues of affordability, identified in the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Area Housing Needs Assessment (2023).**



### The reason for the policy

4.7.1 Wiltshire Local Plan Policy 1 (Settlement Strategy) classifies and establishes settlement boundaries. 'Settlement boundaries' generally delineate the extent of urban areas typically reflecting what has been built. Development within boundaries is generally supported. Land beyond settlement boundaries is countryside. Development outside settlement boundaries will be more controlled in the interests of sustainability and to preserve the character of open countryside. Wiltshire Council will amend boundaries during the Plan period, as development takes place and allocations are built out on the edge of settlements.

4.7.2 Melksham is defined as a Market Town, with the ability to support sustainable patterns of living and potential for significant development that will increase jobs and homes to help sustain and enhance services and facilities and promote better levels of self containment. It also defines Shaw and Whitley together as a single large village, where development will help ensure its communities thrive, by meeting local housing needs and supporting employment services and facilities.

4.7.3 The Neighbourhood Plan will align with Local Plan Policy 1 in supporting appropriate windfall infill sustainable development within Melksham and Shaw and Whitley. JMNP2 will increase local direction and guidance of the delivery and type of housing to meet local people's needs.



### Settlement Boundaries

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

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

Market Towns: Melksham and Bowerhill village

Large Villages: Shaw and Whitley

Small Villages: Beanacre and Berryfield

4.7.4 Melksham neighbourhood plan area Housing Needs Assessment (2023) has provided updated independent evidence of the specific needs for market and affordable housing at Melksham and at Shaw and Whitley.

4.7.5 This technical evidence was reinforced with detailed feedback to a community housing survey undertaken in May 2022 that was answered by 138 local people largely of working age. This re-confirmed concern about recent rates of growth, but support for JMNP2 addressing local housing issues. It pointed to a perceived need for smaller and family affordable market and rental housing, bungalows and accessible homes.

4.7.6 The majority of affordable market and social rental housing is within Melksham, which provides a good range of housing types and tenures, but with notable unmet and predicted needs and demands. There remains a very low proportion of smaller family housing and affordable housing in Shaw and Whitley, with ongoing low levels of delivery.

4.7.7 The Housing Needs Assessment suggested that at Melksham, future housing delivery should be evenly split between 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom, 4-bedroom dwellings. But at Shaw and Whitley the emphasis should be to provide smaller homes to re-balance the opportunities. This mix may require some adjustment for the sub-areas based on the existing dwelling mixes and populations in these areas.

4.7.8 Local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level homes in Melksham and Melksham Without, unless they have a large deposit. Private renting of entry level housing is only affordable to average incomes earners.

4.7.8 The report suggests that both affordable rented and market housing is valuable in meeting the needs of local people on various incomes, but particular higher demand for affordable discounted market homes suggests affordable housing delivered through developer contributions should be split:

- 45% affordable rented tenures, either affordable or social rent
- 55% affordable (discounted) home ownership



### First Homes

Government require that 25% of all affordable housing to be delivered as First Homes and this is echoed in the draft Wiltshire Local Plan Review Policy 76.

The local housing needs assessment of affordability for the JMNP area has recommended that First Homes in the Neighbourhood Plan Area are delivered at a 40% discount, extending ownership accessibility to households on below average (mean) incomes.

### Allocations of Land for Housing

**These policies help to meet objective 5:** Supporting sustainable development of new housing and associated facilities within settlements, and exceptionally, adjacent to settlements.

#### Background and reason for the allocation policies

4.8.1 Our first JMNP did not allocate land for housing at Melksham, but did allocate land for about 18 dwellings at Middle Farm, Whitley. Growth at Melksham exceeded the Core Strategy requirement up to 2026 by nearly 20%, but at Shaw and Whitley, there had been no affordable housing delivery since 2000.

4.8.2 The Wiltshire Local Plan updates the defined settlement boundary of Melksham and Bowerhill to take account of these recent developments. It also provides an indicative target for future development of homes, employment space and community infrastructure for Melksham and Bowerhill and a separate figure for Shaw and Whitley up to 2038.

4.8.3 By deducting the number of homes that are already built and those in the pipeline, with planning permission, a Local Plan “residual” or remaining growth target for Melksham of an additional 1,170 homes can be identified to be planned for and delivered by 2038.

4.8.4 To meet a substantial proportion of this, the Local Plan proposes allocating land for about 845 dwellings on three greenfield sites at:

- Land to the east of Melksham; Approximately 425 dwellings and 5 hectares of employment land
- Land off Bath Road: Approximately 135 dwellings plus 2ha land for expansion of Melksham Oak Community School
- Land north of A3102: Approximately 285 dwellings

4.8.5 The Local Plan suggests that land for a further 200 dwellings at Melksham should be delivered through housing site allocations made by the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.8.6 The Local Plan also identifies a separate housing target of 73 dwellings to be enabled at Shaw and Whitley, which it identifies as a large village. This figure is reduced to a “residual” target of about 50 dwellings by deducting the first JMNP site allocation for about 18 dwellings at Middle Farm, Whitley and recent planning permissions.

4.8.7 The Local Plan leaves site allocations to the Neighbourhood Plan to lead. It is important that the plan takes this lead to direct where this growth will, and should not, be delivered.



### Finding the right sites for the JMNP2

The Neighbourhood Plan review has undertaken a thorough and robust process to propose a schedule of site allocations that maximise sustainable development opportunities and delivery of benefits to our community.

A new neighbourhood Plan area “call for housing sites” was conducted as part of the JMNP review process. The local call, combined with Melksham area sites listed in the Wiltshire Council “Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) produced a long-list of potential allocation sites.

Every available site was subject to independent assessment to determine suitability and deliverability to produce a shortlist of sites potentially worthy of further consideration. Site promoters have been approached to re-confirm availability and deliverability and shortlisted sites have been reviewed to consider how it can achieve the JMNP objectives and community needs to produce the selected sites allocations and associated criteria.

4.8.8 National and Wiltshire policy and guidance prioritises the sustainable development of previously developed land close to services and community facilities.

4.8.9 This can be achieved in Melksham with the allocation of brownfield sites. With the validation of the local people and businesses who responded to our Town Centre Master Plan consultation in 2022, together with Wiltshire Council and site owners, JMNP2 allocations at Melksham are paving the way for re-use of two of the town’s most central and sustainable regeneration sites.

4.8.10 Allocation of the former Cooper Tires site will breathe new life into the historic factory site to create a new riverside quarter that will deliver new modern employment space, opportunities for riverside cultural and leisure uses as well as new homes, including affordable homes to meet local housing needs. In addition the plan allocates the former library site (which includes Lowbourne house and the Further Education building) to enable the development of about 50 affordable dwellings, specifically tailored to meet the needs of older people’s housing needs.



4.8.11 To take greater control of future development at Shaw and Whitley and to meet its distinct future needs, an extended allocation of land at Middle Farm, Whitley for development of about 40 homes including land for at least 16 affordable homes is proposed.

4.8.12 There are no public children's play facilities or any public areas of natural green space in Whitley. The nearest facilities are in neighbouring Shaw. The combined Middle Farm sites focus the enabling of new smaller market and affordable housing within a coordinated approach that will secure, in principle, the provision of these facilities within the allocated site, combined with enhancements to pedestrian crossing facilities and public footpaths, linking to the open countryside. The allocation requires new green infrastructure that will create a screened buffer between the village boundary and the Electricity Sub-station.

4.8.13 At Whitley Farm, First Lane, consideration of the potential to allocate land for housing development has been supported by detailed consideration of the heritage setting of the listed farm buildings and impact on the landscape setting of the elevated site. A small allocation of land to accommodate about ten sensitively located and designed homes and sensitive conversion of the farm's listed threshing mill, will enable the regeneration of the derelict farmyard whilst protecting the sensitive setting of the listed farm

buildings and securing restoration of the boundary landscape and hedgerow.

4.8.14 Applicants bringing forward development proposals for this site are strongly encouraged to follow the Community Engagement Protocol as included in Appendix 1.

4.8.15 The allocation policies follow on the next pages.

### Land at Cooper Tires Factory Site

#### **Policy 7.1: Land at Cooper Tires Factory Site**

**The 12.88 Hectare former Cooper Tires Factory Site, as defined in figure 6, is allocated for a comprehensive and exemplary mixed-use conservation and development.**

**All development proposals will accord with a comprehensive master plan to be approved by Wiltshire Council.**

#### The reason for the policy

4.8.16 Land at the Cooper Tires factory site comprises the c12.8 hectare main factory site, with boundaries to the River Avon, Bath Road, Scotland Road and A350. The allocation includes the small “Bakers Yard” car park site to the west side of Bath Road.

4.8.17 The site has been the focus of industry since the 18th Century and has been producing rubber and tyres since c1890. Avon Rubber and then Cooper Tires grew to become one of Melksham’s most important employers and a landmark for the

Figure 6: Cooper Tires Redline Plan



town. Production at the plant decreased during the 21st century and is planned to fully cease at the end of 2023.

4.8.18 Local people continue to have strong associations with the factory. Community and Stakeholder engagement has been undertaken to inform the Town Centre Master Plan report priorities, and identified almost unanimous support for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan addressing policy that would support the regeneration of the site to deliver a new mix of uses.

4.8.19 Previous consideration of the site by Wiltshire Council's "Employment Land Review" (2018) concluded that the site had potential for development with a mix of uses, although this did not include residential uses at the time. Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy has not identified the site as a Principal Employment Area. It is not included in protected or proposed principal sites in the emerging Local Plan (2020-38).

4.8.20 Owners of the site made it available for assessment and potential selection for allocation within the JMNP (2020-38). Whilst the site is known to be constrained by flood risk and contamination, as previously developed and now under-used land, the site assessment considered the site potentially suitable for allocation.

4.8.21 JMNP Steering Group recognise the scale and ambition of allocation of the site. However, it is also aware of its duty to

respond positively to the needs and wishes of the community and to lead local policies to secure the objectives of the JMNP.

4.8.22 Through engagement with the current site owners, it is known that the site ownership is likely to change within the JMNP period. Nonetheless, in response to community wishes and national planning guidance, proactive and positive planning for the future of the site is considered appropriate and timely, given the closure of the factory site.

4.8.23 In selecting the site for allocation, JMNP Steering Group has also been in close dialogue with Wiltshire Council. It is aware of the challenges site constraints impose and the need to support the allocation with robust evidence that will provide sufficient confidence that regeneration of the site can be viably delivered in whole or part by 2038. To this end, the JMNP Steering Group is working in collaboration with Wiltshire Council and site owners to inform and produce an agreed site regeneration study and framework master plan. Upon endorsement, it will provide a viable framework to secure confidence of viability at this stage. It will supplement this site allocation and form the basis upon which any comprehensive outline planning application or detailed scheme is considered. It is expected that this framework will be endorsed by Wiltshire Council and the JMNP Qualifying Bodies prior to submission of the draft JMNP2 to Wiltshire Council.

### Master Plan Led Approach

4.8.24 Development must be in conformity with a comprehensive master plan and design code which is to be approved by Wiltshire Council that will ensure site development optimizes community, environmental and economic benefits and ensures site remediation and on and off-site infrastructure is delivered as part of the regeneration.

### Land Uses

4.8.25 The combined sites are allocated for exemplar master planned regeneration to deliver mixed-use regeneration which will comprise employment and commercial, leisure and cultural uses that address Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 10 (Employment Sites) and that complement and strengthen the quality, offer and vitality of Melksham town centre, in conformity with JMNP Policy 9 (Town Centre), contributing towards the delivery of priorities identified in the Melksham Town Centre Master Plan report (2023).

4.8.26 Development should include at least 150 dwellings to include open market and affordable housing to contribute to meeting local housing needs and in conformity with adopted Wiltshire council housing policies and informed by the Melksham Housing Needs Appraisal (2023)

### Flood Risk and Contamination

4.8.27 Significant parts of the site are within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3. The master plan must address flood risk and water management in conformity with national and local planning policies, as well as JMNP Policy 3 (Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management).

4.8.28 As a result of previous industrial processes undertaken there is significant site ground contamination. The masterplan must be supported by a full ground contamination assessment and support the delivery of de-contamination including measures to prevent any pollution of the River Avon and ground water.

### Heritage

4.8.29 Avon House (listed Grade II) and the former art deco canteen must be retained, restored and converted to viable new uses. The design and uses of any adjacent development must protect and enhance the setting of the listed building.

4.8.30 In alignment with Wiltshire Core Strategy Conservation and Historic Environment Policy 58, proposal must protect or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings including The Town Bridge (Grade II) and The Unicorn Public House (Grade II).

4.8.31 The former canteen building is identified as a non designated heritage assets by Policy 21 of this Plan is to be retained and conserved as an integral part of the scheme.



4.8.32 The master plan must be supported by a robust heritage survey and assessment to be undertaken before any demolition. Identified historic fabric or artefacts identified are to be retained in-site or removed to be re-used or displayed.

4.8.33 Investigation will be needed to identify the presence and significance of archaeological remains, including industrial archaeology across the sites. Mitigation should include avoidance of high value archaeological remains where preservation in situ is to be required.

4.8.34 Where viable, existing building materials including historic bricks, roof tiles and timber should be retained to be re-used within the fabric of new development on the site.

4.8.35 Interpretation of the site's industrial history within its design and presentation of artifices, re-cycled materials and interpretative art.

### **Sustainable Design and Construction**

4.8.36 In conformity with Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 41 (Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy) and Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 (Sustainable Design and Construction) the master plan and following detailed proposals should have regard to the twelve placemaking "considerations"

identified in "Building for a Healthy Life" design code or an agreed similar guidance.

4.8.37 Development proposals must be supported by a sustainable energy strategy to demonstrate how it will contribute to Wiltshire Council's and the UK's target of net zero carbon targets for 2030 and 2050 respectively.

4.8.38 It should combine design to maximise sustainable travel with minimising all operational energy use and greenhouse gas production and by maximising the integration of renewable and low-carbon energy technologies such as heat pumps and solar PV and opportunities for cooling through integration with on-site green and blue infrastructure. The master plan and detailed proposals should be supported by:

- A sustainability and energy statement that demonstrates how the operational development supports a move towards carbon neutrality and adaptation to climate change upon completion, in line with Wiltshire Council's 2030 carbon zero ambition.
- An embodied Carbon Assessment that demonstrates a score of less than 900kg/sqm of carbon can be achieved within the development of the substructure, superstructure, and finishes.

### Access and Transport

4.8.39 The level site is in a highly sustainable location directly neighbouring the town centre, King George V Park, neighbouring communities. Bus and rail connections linking across Wiltshire and beyond are immediately adjacent to the site.

4.8.40 In conformity with Wiltshire Core Strategy transportation policies 60-53 and JMNP Policy Policy 11 (Sustainable Transport and Active Travel) and Policy 4 (Ultra Low Emission Vehicle charging), regeneration will be expected to harness these assets to deliver exemplary multi-modal transportation solutions that optimise potential for active and sustainable travel choices and maximise the inclusion and accessibility of the site to all people.

4.8.41 Development must create a new and integrated network of pedestrian priority streets and public spaces, creating linkages from the town centre, railway station, King George V Park and the riverside. Streets and parking should conform with the principles of Manual for Streets.

4.8.42 Public access will be provided along the entire riverside frontage of the site, linking into existing public rights of way and the new streets and public realm to be provided within the site.

4.8.43 Vehicular access to the site should be from Bath Road and the A350. Only limited residential vehicular access will be supported from Scotland Road.

4.8.44 The walking and wheeling route between the site and Melksham Railway Station and Town Centre must be improved including the replacement of the existing subway crossing of the A340 with a signal controlled crossing facility and provision of enhanced pedestrian and cycling crossings and infrastructure to secure safe and convenient river crossing to King George V Park and improved connections with neighbouring areas.

4.8.45 All development will be required to be within 200m convenient walk of bus stops serving all of Melksham's local and connecting bus services. This must include the provision of new bus stop facilities along the Bath Road frontage.

4.8.46 Improvements to replace the existing pedestrian subway should explore the potential for the provision of a bus only route along the Bath Road frontage linking from the A350 to the Town Bridge.

4.8.47 Parking and servicing requirements should be provided in conformity with Wiltshire Council Parking Standards SPD. This must include provision of safe parking and storage for cycles and E-scooters. All residential and business and other parking will be

expected to provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with current building regulations.

### **Public Realm and Riverside**

4.8.48 The master plan must deliver a high-quality public realm that connects to the surrounding streets, comprising a new network of safe, accessible pedestrian priority streets and public spaces and the provision of a new vibrant public riverside environment that connects between the Town Bridge and Scotland Road pedestrian bridge (Murray Walk Bridge). The riverside public realm should be addressed by new ground floor active uses, upper-level residential units and landscape and ecology measures that will protect and enhance the riverside and water environment. Residential streets and spaces must be addressed by ground-floor habitable room windows and front doors.

### **Character and Townscape**

4.8.49 Development of the scheme master plan and any following detailed scheme proposals will take account of design and placemaking priorities and policies within Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 57 (High Quality Design and Placemaking) and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 20 (Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design) and Policy all proposals will be expected to have regard to Melksham Design Guide and Code (2023) and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2023).

4.8.50 Redevelopment must be of an exemplary quality design which creates a new attractive, integrated, inclusive and vibrant mixed-use urban riverside quarter of Melksham. It will enhance the character and appearance of the town and the conserved heritage assets within and in the context of the site.

4.8.51 The masterplan and building must weave in characteristics, materials and detailing, including re-used materials that reference and celebrate the century of tyre manufacturing that took place on the site and any previous significant heritage.

4.8.52 The layout and buildings must create positive and complimentary relationships with existing neighbouring buildings and uses on or addressing the boundary of the site. Proposals will also protect or enhance the amenity of existing neighbouring residents and businesses including housing along Scotland Road, neighbouring housing addressing the A350 and the historic "City" quarter to the south of the site's Bath Road frontage. New residents will be provided with a high quality of amenity.

### **Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

4.8.53 The site presents a significant opportunity to create a new urban and riverside landscape of green and blue infrastructure that will simultaneously enhance attractiveness, contribute positively to carbon neutrality and increase biodiversity within the new quarter.



4.8.54 The approved master plan for the site will address Wiltshire Core Strategy biodiversity, landscape and green infrastructure policies 50, 51 and 52 and JMNP Policies Policy 12 (Green Infrastructure) and Policy 13: (Biodiversity). They will include a landscape and green and blue infrastructure strategy and code that will:

- create a beautiful and welcoming public realm;
- contribute to climate change resilience;
- retain and protect valued existing green and blue infrastructure features; and,
- achieve a minimum of 20% net gain over the pre-development biodiversity.

A buffer and ecological protection zone should be maintained throughout demolition and construction periods.

### **Trees**

4.8.55 In conformity with JMNP Policy 17 (Trees and Hedgerows), the master plan must be informed by an arboriculture survey and assessment. Proposals must retain and protect identified valued trees and include additional street and riverside tree planting. A demolition and construction period tree protection zone must be provided for all trees to be retained.

### **Wilts & Berks Canal Link Project**

4.8.56 In conformity with Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 53 (Wiltshire's Canals), master planning must have regard to the safeguarding of the Wilts & Berks Canal Link Project route and connection to the River Avon and integrate or future-proof the potential implementation of the canal link project where it relates directly to the site.

### **Local Infrastructure Contributions**

4.8.57 In conformity with Core Strategy Policy 3 (Infrastructure Requirements) development proposals will be expected to make proportionate contributions to the delivery of new and enhanced in-site and off-site infrastructure that addresses demands arising from the development.

4.8.58 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions will be received by the Town Council. 10% of the CIL will be directed to local infrastructure projects jointly agreed between the Town and Parish Councils. These may include measures that progress priority objectives of the JMNP and the Town Centre Master Plan Report (2023).

### Land at the Former Melksham Library Site

#### **Policy 7.2: Land at the Former Melksham Library Site**

##### **1. Land Uses**

The site is allocated for:

- a. about 50 age restricted or extra care apartments (Class C3) or development of a residential care home (Class C2) to meet the identified local needs for accessible and affordable housing for older and/or disabled people;
- b. residential units will be 100% affordable housing to rent through a registered social provider;
- c. separate commercial (class E) floorspace; and,
- d. associate parking and private amenity space

Market and affordable housing provided will be expected to be of a type and size to meet local housing needs identified in the Melksham Housing Needs Assessment (2023).

**2. Responding to Climate Change**  
The development must address the challenge of climate change and support moves to carbon neutrality and adaptation to climate change in accordance with policy 1 of this Plan, and policy 4 and 85 of the Wiltshire Local Plan.

##### **3. Heritage**

Development proposals will be supported by a heritage impact assessment undertaken to a methodology approved by Wiltshire Council.

Proposals will protect or enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings and the character of Melksham Conservation Area. Investigation will be needed to identify the presence and significance of archaeological remains. Mitigation should include avoidance of high value archaeological remains where preservation in situ is to be required.

##### **4. Character and Design**

Development of the site will take account of design and place making priorities and policies within Wiltshire Local Plan (2020-38) and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-38). All proposals will also be expected to have regard to the Melksham Town Centre Master Plan Report (2023), Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023) and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2023).

Redevelopment of the area must respect and enhance the grain, character and appearance of the town, the settings of the neighbouring character area and the conserved heritage assets within and outside the site.

The scheme will be expected to compliment and integrate within the surrounding townscape character and be between two and three

storeys in height. It will be expected to be of a high quality of design and utilise natural materials that will enhance the character of the conservation area.

The scheme should protect the amenity of neighbouring uses and residents of Union Street and new residents. Housing or care home development must be designed to provide a high standard of residential accommodation and wellbeing for new residents by meeting accessibility requirements set out in Part M of the Building Regulations and achieving principles set out in the Design principles, such as those set out in the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report, including:

- a. integration with the surrounding context
- b. social spaces that link with the

community

c. space standards that facilitate flexibility

d. enhanced natural light

e. priority for pedestrians in outdoor spaces

Any commercial development must be distinct and separate from the residential scheme. This includes all vehicle and pedestrian accesses, parking, servicing and amenity spaces. The commercial component must be designed to maintain a high standard of privacy, security and amenity for residents of the site and those nearby.

### 5. Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity

The site contains mature trees along part of the Lowbourn frontage set behind a low retaining wall. To safeguard existing trees the extent

of development and specification of surfaces must be informed by an arboriculture survey and assessment. A demolition and construction period tree protection zone must be provided for all trees to be retained. Where there is an unavoidable loss of trees on site, the number and type of replacement trees should be informed by the quality and size of trees lost.

The residential development will be expected to provide a high standard of shared accessible private resident amenity space that will:

- create a beautiful and communal environment;
- contribute to the scheme's climate change resilience; and,
- achieve a minimum of 20% biodiversity net gain over the pre-development biodiversity.

continued overleaf

### **6. Transport**

**The site is in a highly sustainable location, neighbouring town centre services, public open space and public transport connections linking across Wiltshire and beyond.**

**The scheme will be expected to provide safe and convenient walking and 'wheeling' connections to the public realm and optimise potential for the inclusion and accessibility of the site for all people and particularly for older and disabled residents.**

**Vehicular access to the site should be from Lowbourne, potentially utilising the existing access point.**

**Resident and visitor parking and servicing requirements should be provided in conformity with Wiltshire Council parking standards. This must include provision of safe parking and storage for cycles and personal**

**mobility devices. All residential, business and other parking will be expected to provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with current building regulations/Wiltshire Council standards.**

### **7. Contributions to Local Infrastructure**

**Subject to viability, the development will be expected to make proportionate contributions towards local infrastructure delivery.**



## Land at the Former Melksham Library Site

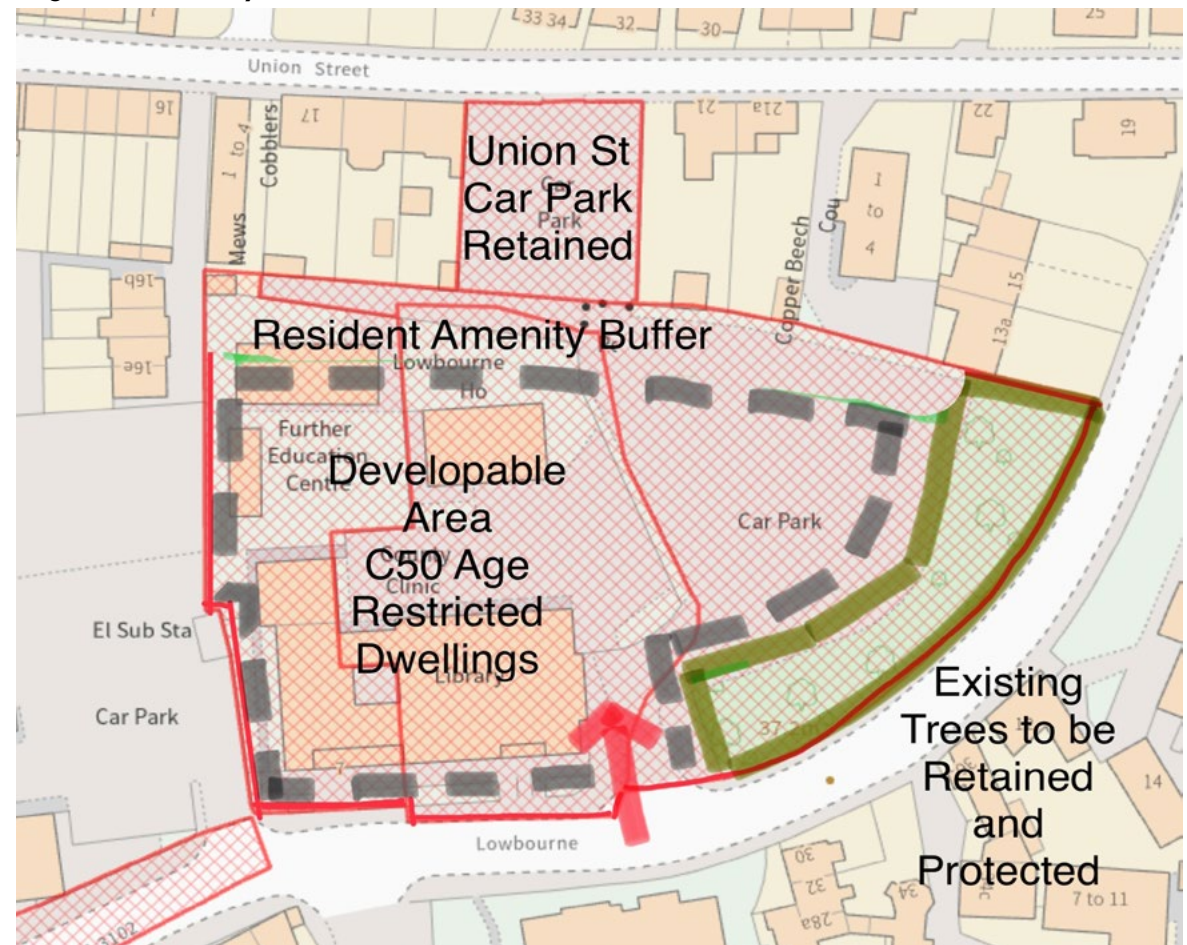
### The reason for the policy

4.8.59 The c0.5 hectare site is previously developed land located on the eastern edge of the town centre. It is within the conservation area, close to a number of designated heritage assets.

4.8.60 The site comprises the former library, Lowbourne House, which is currently in short lease employment use, and associated car parking to the east. The site also includes the former restaurant building attached to the west of the library building.

4.8.61 It is excellently located within short and level walking distance of local shops and services, public transport, the Campus leisure centre and library and King George V Park. The existing buildings and open car park are not of heritage value and do not contribute positively to the character of the conservation area. Mature trees which line the eastern boundary of the car park site contribute to the character of the conservation area.

Figure 7: Library Site Redline Plan



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data  
© Crown copyright and database right 2023

### Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley

#### **Policy 7.3: Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley**

##### **1. Land use**

- a. approximately 10 new dwellings to include affordable housing in conformity with Wiltshire Council Policy;**
- b. potential sensitive conservation and conversion of the listed Whitley Farm barn.**

**Market and any affordable housing provided will be expected to be of a type and size to meet local housing needs identified in the Melksham Housing Needs Assessment (2023).**

##### **2. Responding to Climate Change**

**The development must address the challenge of climate change and support moves to carbon neutrality and adaptation to climate change in accordance with policy 1 of this Plan, and policy 4 and 85 of the Wiltshire Local Plan.**

##### **3. Heritage**

**To minimise the likelihood of harm to the setting of adjacent listed Whitley Farm House, barn and mounting block, new housing development on the site will be limited to the area identified in allocation diagram (figure 8).**

**Residential conversion of the listed barn must be in conformity with Wiltshire Local Plan Policy 99.**

**Proposed development will be supported by a scheme specific heritage impact assessment. Any identified harm caused by the scheme must be either mitigated or outweighed by other conservation benefits.**

##### **4. Archaeology**

**Investigation will be needed to identify the presence and significance of archaeological remains. Mitigation**

**should include avoidance of high value archaeological remains where preservation in situ is to be required.**

##### **5. Character and Design**

**Development of the site will take account of design and place making priorities and policies within Wiltshire Local Plan (2020-38) and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-38). All proposals will also be expected to have regard to Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023) and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2023).**

**Development shall be restricted to single and two storey housing to be of a design, character and appearance and materials that complement the agricultural and farm yard context and setting of Whitley Farm and minimise visual impact in views from the countryside**

### **6. Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

**Development proposals will be supported by a landscape and visual impact assessment that will inform the extent and forms of development adjacent to the rural boundaries and landscape mitigation.**

**Development will include a landscape and green and blue infrastructure that will:**

- a. protect the setting of the farm and rural surrounding countryside between Shaw and Whitley;**
- b. restore damaged boundary hedgerow and remove redundant agricultural structures and machinery;**
- c. contribute to climate change resilience; and**
- d. achieve a minimum of 20% net**

**gain over the pre-development biodiversity.**

**Proposals will be accompanied by a landscape conservation scheme that retains and secures the sustained management of existing hedgerow rural boundaries.**

### **7. Transport**

**The scheme will be expected to provide safe and convenient walking and wheeling connections to existing pavements in First Lane and the existing public right of way to the rural boundary of the site.**

**Vehicular access to the site should be from First Lane, potentially utilising the existing access point.**

**Resident and visitor parking and servicing requirements should be provided in conformity with Wiltshire**

**Council parking standards. This must include provision of safe parking and storage for cycles.**

**All residential parking will be expected to provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with current building regulations.**

### **8. Flooding**

**The scheme must be supported by a flood risk assessment and include appropriate mitigation measures to prevent any increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere.**

**Contributions to Local Infrastructure Subject to viability, the development will be expected to make proportionate contributions towards local infrastructure delivery.**



### Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley

#### The reason for the policy

4.8.62 The 1.6 hectare site is located off First Lane in Whitley. It comprises various farm buildings associated with Whitley Farm. The site includes Grade II listed farm buildings including Whitley Farmhouse, threshing barn, and mounting block. The farm and yard are no longer in use for agricultural purposes. Existing 20th century agricultural buildings on the yard and extending into the fields are disused and in poor condition.

4.8.63 Independent heritage assessments undertaken in 2020 as part of preparing JMNP1, validated by Wiltshire Council, concluded that there is limited scope for residential development of the north west section of the farm yard, that could enable the enhancement of the setting of the heritage assets and the re-use of the redundant listed dairy barn. Development of the entire dairy yard site was assessed and it was concluded that it would extend development quantum to the extent that would harm the rural setting of the listed farm buildings.

4.8.64 Landscape assessments carried out in 2020 identified the need for any scheme to secure the restoration of damaged boundary hedgerow and removal of redundant structures to conserve and enhance the setting of the elevated farm complex in rural views from public rights of way.

Figure 8: Land at Whitley Farm Redline Plan



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023



### Land at Middle Farm – Plot A and B

#### The reason for these policies

4.8.65 The c1.6 hectare site (as identified in Figure 9 as Plot A) was previously allocated for residential development in the first JMNP. This allocation is retained and revised to take account of the new Local Plan and the JMNP 2 policies and to integrate it with the design and delivery of the neighbouring site allocation (Policy 7.5) on land to its immediate east – Plot B.

4.8.66 Plot B is approximately 5 hectares of level agricultural land to the rear of land allocated for development of about 40 homes and public open space. The site is in the same ownership as Plot A, allocated in the first JMNP, and is capable of coordinated phased development.

4.8.67 The layout, access and design of both sites must be integrated and complementary. The allocation policies are set out on the following pages.

Figure 9: Land at Middle Farm Redline Plan



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

### Land at Middle Farm – Plot A

#### **Policy 7.4: Allocation of Land at Middle Farm (Plot A), Corsham Road, Whitley**

##### **1. Land Use**

- a. approximately 18 dwellings to include 40% affordable homes;
- b. equipped play space;
- c. access to Corsham Road and pedestrian crossing facilities;
- d. buffer landscape.

Market and affordable housing provided will be expected to be of a type and size to meet local housing needs identified in the Melksham Housing Needs Assessment (2023).

##### **2. Master Planning**

The development must be supported by a master plan and code to be agreed by Wiltshire Council and Melksham Without Parish Council that demonstrates how allocation sites 7.4 and 7.5 are to be integrated, including the provision of safe access,

open space provision and layout and design principles.

Development should have regard to the twelve placemaking “considerations” identified in “Building for a Healthy Life” design code or an agreed similar guidance.

**3. Responding to Climate Change**  
The development must address the challenge of climate change and support moves to carbon neutrality and adaptation to climate change in accordance with policy 1 of this Plan, and policy 4 and 85 of the Wiltshire Local Plan.

##### **4. Heritage**

Investigation will be needed to identify the presence and significance of archaeological remains. Mitigation should include avoidance of high value archaeological remains where preservation in situ is to be required.

**5. Design and Character**  
Development of the site will take account of design and place making priorities and policies within the Wiltshire Local Plan (2020-38) and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-38). All proposals will also be expected to have regard to Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023) and to the Wiltshire Design Guide (2023).

Development will be single and two storey form, be of a layout, and use materials that protects the amenity of neighbouring and new residents, the character of Whitley and the rural setting of the site.

The developable area will be contained within land south of the junction with Top Lane and a c15m minimum landscaped buffer along the western and eastern boundary of the site incorporating new hedgerow and tree planting.

### **6. Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

**Development proposals will be supported by a landscape and visual impact assessment that will inform the extent and forms of development adjacent to the rural boundaries and landscape mitigation.**

**Development will include a landscape and green and blue infrastructure that will:**

- a. protect the setting of the farm and rural openness and tranquility of surrounding countryside between Shaw and Whitley;**
- b. contribute to climate change resilience;**
- c. provide a Local Equipped Area of Play integrated into the open space;**
- d. retain and protect valued existing green and blue infrastructure features; and,**
- e. achieve a minimum of 20% net gain over the pre-development biodiversity.**

**Proposals will be accompanied by a landscape conservation scheme that retains and secures the sustained management of existing hedgerow boundaries.**

### **7. Transport**

**Vehicular access will be from Corsham Road. Enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities across Corsham Road will be provided to an adoptable standard.**

**The existing Public Right of Way along the site's northern boundary, will be retained and enhanced and incorporated within accessible public green space to the north of the site, north of Top Lane.**

**Resident and visitor parking and servicing requirements should be provided in conformity with Wiltshire Council parking standards. This must include provision of safe parking and storage for cycles.**

**All residential parking will be expected to provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with current building regulations.**

### **8. Flooding**

**The scheme must be supported by a flood risk assessment and include appropriate mitigation measures to prevent any increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere**

### **9. Contributions to Local Infrastructure**

**Subject to viability, the development will be expected to make proportionate contributions towards local infrastructure delivery.**

### Land at Middle Farm – Plot B

#### **Policy 7.5: Allocation of Land at Middle Farm (Plot B), Corsham Road, Whitley**

##### **1. Land Use**

- a. about 40 dwellings to include 40% affordable homes;**
- b. community open space; and, pedestrian crossing facilities; and,**
- c. buffer landscape and enhanced public right of way.**

**Market and affordable housing provided will be expected to be of a type and size to meet local housing needs identified in the Melksham Housing Needs Assessment (2023).**

##### **2. Master Planning**

**The development must be supported by a master plan and code to be agreed by Wiltshire Council and Melksham Without Parish Council that demonstrates how allocation sites 7.4 and 7.5 are to be integrated, including the provision of safe access,**

**open space provision and layout and design principles.**

**Development should have regard to the twelve placemaking “considerations” identified in “Building for a Healthy Life” design code or an agreed similar guidance.**

**3. Responding to Climate Change**  
**The development must address the challenge of climate change and support moves to carbon neutrality and adaptation to climate change in accordance with policy 1 of this Plan, and policy 4 and 85 of the Wiltshire Local Plan.**

##### **4. Heritage**

**Investigation will be needed to identify the presence and significance of archaeological remains. Mitigation should include avoidance of high value archaeological remains where preservation in situ is to be required.**

**4. Design and Character**  
**Development of the site will take account of design and place making priorities and policies within the Wiltshire Local Plan (2020-38) and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-38). All proposals will also be expected to have regard to Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023) and to the Wiltshire Design Guide (2023).**

**Development will be single and two storey form, be of a layout, and use materials that protects the amenity of neighbouring and new residents, the character of Whitley and the rural setting of the site.**

##### **5. Landscape, Green**

**Infrastructure and Biodiversity**  
**Development proposals will be supported by a landscape and visual impact assessment that will inform the extent and forms of development**



**adjacent to the rural boundaries and landscape mitigation.**

**Development will include landscape and green infrastructure that will:**

- a. protect the setting and tranquillity of surrounding countryside;**
- b. retain and protect valued existing green and blue infrastructure features including boundary hedgerows;**
- c. provide landscape buffer and screening to minimise outlook to the electricity sub-station;**
- d. provide a community open green space to meet local needs and aspirations through community engagement;**
- e. contribute to climate change resilience; and,**
- f. achieve a minimum of 20% net gain over the pre-development biodiversity.**

**Proposals will be accompanied by a landscape conservation scheme that**

**retains and secures the sustained management of existing hedgerow boundaries.**

### **6. Transport**

**The scheme will be expected to achieve safe and convenient walking and wheeling connections to existing pavements in Corsham Road and the existing public right of way to the north boundary of the site.**

**Vehicular access to the site should be from the adjacent allocated site (Policy 7.4).**

**Development will retain and enhance the existing public right of way along the site's northern boundary, and incorporate accessible public green space to the north of the site.**

**Resident and visitor parking and servicing requirements should be provided in conformity with Wiltshire Council parking standards. This must**

**include provision of safe parking and storage for cycles.**

**All residential parking will be expected to provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with current building regulations.**

### **7. Flooding**

**The scheme must be supported by a flood risk assessment and include appropriate mitigation measures to prevent any increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere**

### **8. Contributions to Local Infrastructure**

**Subject to viability, the development will be expected to make proportionate contributions towards local infrastructure delivery.**

### Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

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

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

**To ensure the sustainability of housing development, proposals must consider, assess and address their necessary infrastructure requirements and, in so far as they relate to matters within the Applicant's control, plan any related programmes of work in co-ordination with the housing to ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with the needs of the community.**

**Infrastructure requirements, in proportion to their scale and in accordance with prevailing Wiltshire policies, will be delivered through the Community Infrastructure Levy, planning conditions and section 106 agreements.**

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

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

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

4.9.3 Financial contributions are required as appropriate from developers for the associated infrastructure cost implications of that development. In Wiltshire this includes Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and S106 contributions from legal agreements on development. The Local Planning Authority is required to produce annual infrastructure funding statements to set out how much money has been raised through developer contributions (CIL and S106) and how it has been spent<sup>13</sup>.

4.9.4 75% of CIL money is retained by Wiltshire Council and 25% is allocated to the Parish or Town Council where the development takes place as this area has a 'made' or adopted Neighbourhood Plan.



# Shopping, Working and Getting Around



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

## **Policies in this section:**

Policy 9: Town Centre

Policy 10: Employment Sites

Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel



### Town Centre

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

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

**Development proposals within the town centre and primary shopping areas (see Figure 10) will be supported provided:**

- a. proposals have regard to Local Plan Policy 68 and demonstrate how they will make a proportionate and positive contribution to achieving the priority aims of the Melksham Town Centre master plan Report 2023;**
- b. the proposal is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre of this Market Town and, where appropriate, preserves or enhances the Conservation Area;**
- c. access to public transport, walking and cycle routes and car parking is considered and addressed;**
- d. where appropriate, a positive contribution is made to conserving and enhancing the appearance and quality of town centre frontages;**
- e. development proposals at edge of centre locations which are inter-connected with the Commercial**

**Area will, additional to the above, be required to evidence that there are no suitable and viable sites or buildings within the defined Commercial Area;**

- f. where required, planning applications for development or change of use of ground floor frontages within the defined town centre primary shopping area (see Figure 7) where they retain or enhance the continuity of active ground floor shop front uses; and,**
- g. greater use is made of upper floors of town centre premises, including for offices, small businesses and residential use with independent access, will be supported where they sustain or enhance the vitality of the host building use and Melksham town centre.**

**Development proposals for Main Town Centre Uses outside of the defined town centre will be required to demonstrate that there are no suitable and viable sites or buildings within the defined town centre, in conformity with Core Strategy Policy 38 or Local Plan Policy 67 upon its adoption**



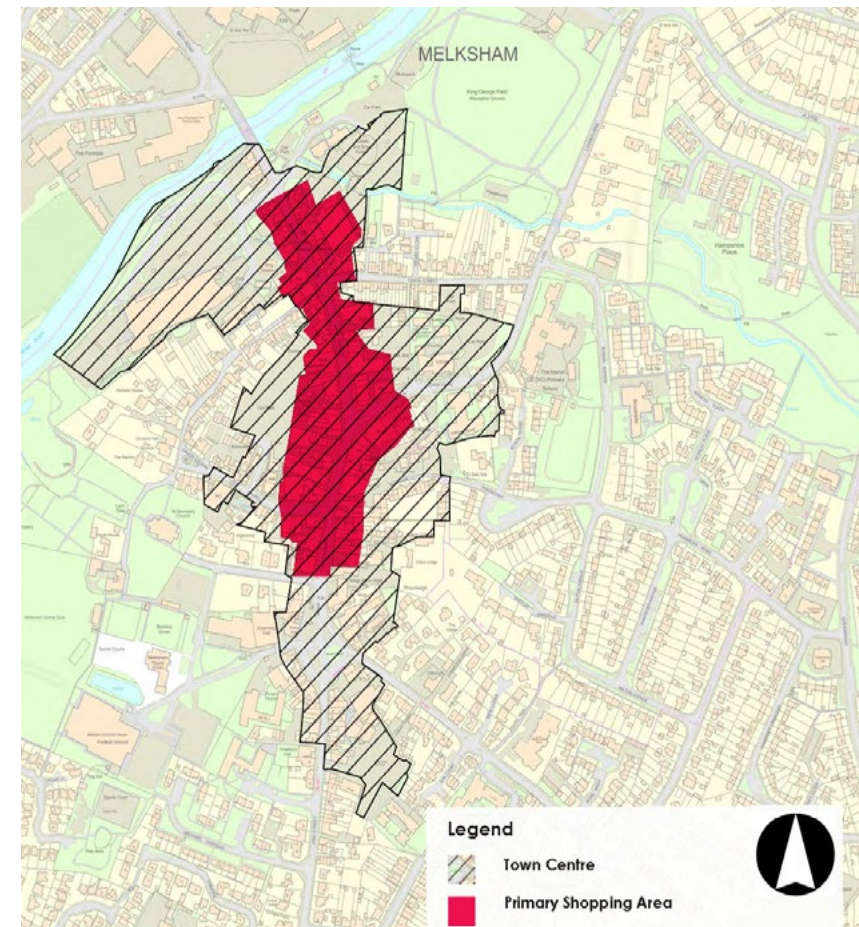
### The reason for the policy

4.9.1 In the rapidly changing national and local context for high streets and market towns, we want to enable our town to change and evolve in response to challenges, changes and opportunities. Most recently, the increase of home-working as a result of coronavirus could provide a boost to local high streets, which means many high streets have the potential to thrive. Town centres are under pressure and, currently, those which can offer enhanced customer experiences and leisure uses to accompany high service retail are in the best position to meet customer needs.

4.9.2 Melksham's priority must be to hold onto, and maintain, the core town centre offer, in order to retain the important sense of place and arrival that this confers. This is becoming even more important in the context of a cost of living crisis.

4.9.3 Use Class E amalgamated nearly all town centre uses in a single class. The updated NPPF requires Local Plans to define a hierarchy of town centres, their boundaries and a Primary Shopping Area; the focus of main town centre uses. Core Strategy retail policy 38 is now out of date. Local Plan Policy 67 (Managing Town Centres) conforms to the NPPF, defining Melksham a transitional market town centre and retaining "sequential testing" requirements of out of centre retail proposals.

Figure 10: Town Centre



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

4.9.4 There are around 155 businesses operating in the town centre and a good number of shops comprising a mix of independent traders, supermarkets and national retail brands.

4.9.5 The prime shopping area around the intersection of Church Street and High Street is busy but activity declines down Bank Street toward the river. Consultation feedback linked to the town centre highlighted that people were concerned about the poor retail offer, unattractive 1960s buildings and heavy traffic flows; all issues that were perceived to detract from the shopping experience.

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

4.9.7 Competition from other centres and changing retail trends means it is important that the town's vitality and viability is maintained and, where possible improved. It is also important that Melksham town centre remains at the heart of the community of the

Plan area, including its wider rural hinterland, as a destination not just for shopping, but also where current and future residents want to work, socialise and live.

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

4.9.9 As part of the commitment to maintaining and enhancing the town centre, the Town Council has prepared a master plan for the town centre, including areas for potential expansion that will inform future development opportunities. Expansion of the town centre is something that the Town Council will be actively considering, particularly in terms of the future of commercial sites on the edge of the town centre, such as Cooper Tires. See **page 115** and Priority Statement 4: Town Centre Regeneration for more information.

4.9.10 Community consultation on the Town Centre master plan took place between 7th February and 19th March 2023 including community drop-in events, stakeholder events, an exhibition and online consultation. The neighbourhood plan steering group also reached out to Wiltshire Council for their views on the proposed master plan. Feedback received from this engagement has been incorporated and is detailed in part 4 of the master plan document.





### Employment Sites

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

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

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

**Proposals for the retention, intensified and reuse of previously developed employment land will be supported in principle, particularly where they will provide space for start-up and small businesses, bringing a range of new employment opportunities. Proposals will be expected to generate the same number, or more, permanent full time equivalent jobs as the existing or former use.**

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

4.10.1 The Wiltshire Employment Land and Workspace Review 2017<sup>14</sup> notes that the two largest employment sectors in the Melksham Community Area are manufacturing and wholesale/retail. The employment profile of the Neighbourhood Plan area has moved in recent years from an industrial economy, dominated by several large international employers, to a mixture of industrial, service and retail businesses.

4.10.2 The level of out-commuting to neighbouring towns and to jobs along the M4 corridor is high, and community engagement confirms that people want to work closer to their homes. Expansion of new employment opportunities within the Plan area is considered desirable to reduce the amount of out-commuting to deliver sustainable travel movements.

4.10.3 Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 35 (Existing Employment Sites) defines Principal Employment Land and seeks to retain these and other employment land within similar employment levels in use classes B1 (office), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (Storage and distribution).



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

4.10.5 Core Strategy Policy 36 (Economic Regeneration) supports Neighbourhood Plans and the preparation of master plans including for appropriate sites to support and facilitate economic regeneration. The Neighbourhood Plan Review has produced a town centre master plan report and is proposing the master plan led regeneration of the Cooper Tires site to stimulate the vitality and regeneration of these two key areas of employment and the local economy.

4.10.6 The creation of use class E and MA has affected the delivery of Core Strategy Policies 34 and 35. The Local Plan seeks to reinforce and increase employment land at Melksham in conformity with new legislation and the NPPF. Policy 63 (existing Employment Land) seeks ongoing retention of employment land at Bowerhill, south of Berryfield, adjacent to Melksham Station and Avonside Enterprise Park. But it enables the potential for some sites to change use. This may include consideration of new uses at the Cooper Tires site.

4.10.7 Policy 64 (Additional Employment Land) sets out the updated employment land strategy to balance employment and economic growth. It proposes 5 hectares of new employment land within the strategic allocation on land east of Melksham.

4.10.8 Local Plan Policy 64 (Managing Town Centres) supports neighbourhood plans in producing local strategies and appropriate site allocations within and on the edge of town centres that would support the viability of the town centre. Neighbourhood plan proposed allocations at Cooper Tires and the former library site, together with the Town Centre Master Plan Report (2023) seek to address the delivery of this policy and enable new employment opportunities.

### Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

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

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

#### **Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**

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

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

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

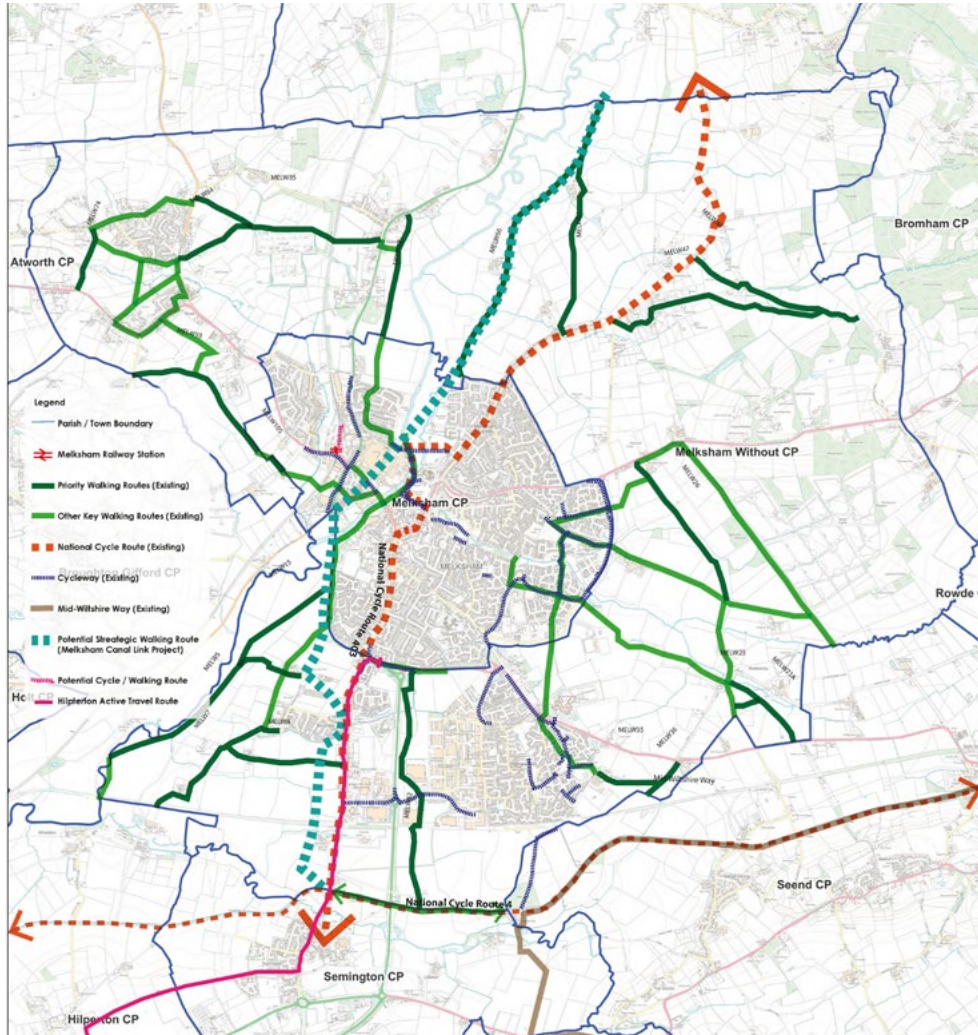
4.11.1 We want to see more opportunities to get around the town and the parish without using a private vehicle. Accessible, safe and attractive infrastructure that promotes and enables walking, cycling and public transport choices for local journeys through the town and parish to key locations such as schools, health and community facilities, green spaces and employment are important. The needs of disabled travellers should also be considered and provided for. Access to public transport for journeys outside the JNP area for business, commuting and leisure purposes complements this. Consideration will be given to the spending of Town and Parish Council CIL receipts on improvements to the sustainable travel network, and public realm.

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

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

- coherence
- directness
- safety
- comfort
- attractiveness

Figure 11: Key Routes for Walking and Cycling



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

## Sustainable transport hierarchy

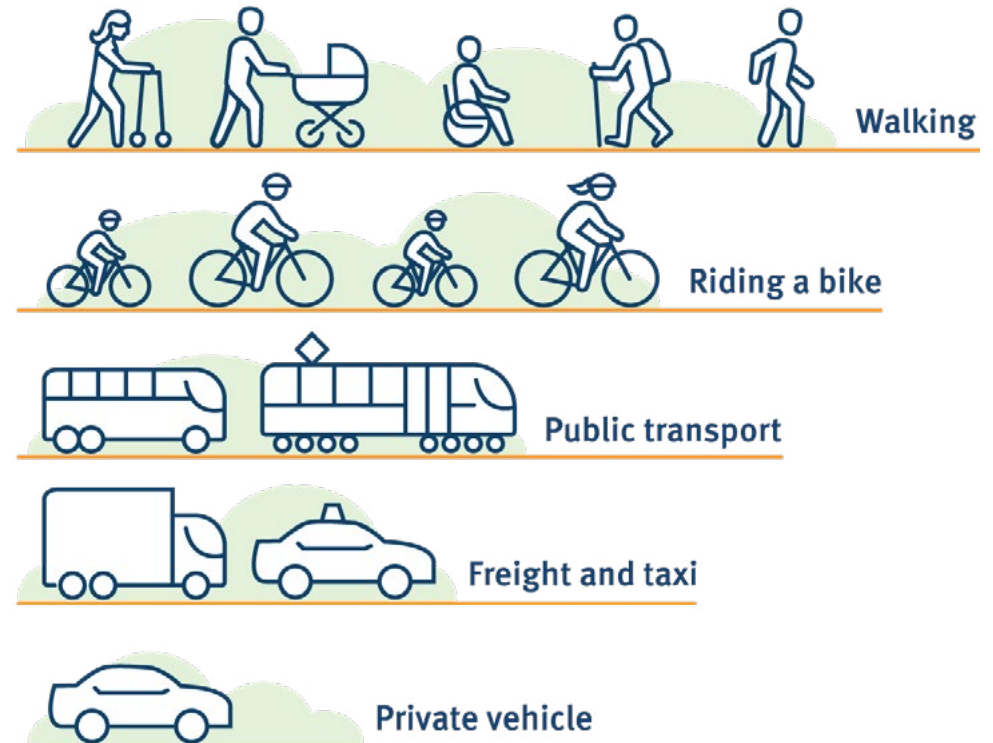


Image sourced from kindpng.com



### Public Transport

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

In 2013 an improved service was introduced which quickly became the fastest growing of GWR's routes. In 2018 the platform was lengthened to allow longer trains to call.

A successful campaign by the Wiltshire based TransWilts Community Rail Partnership (a Community Interest Company) and the Melksham based Transport User Group has resulted in improvements in local rail service providing a two-hourly service in each direction, each day between Westbury and Swindon. Small incremental improvements are also being gained, such as late evening services from Swindon.

It is desirable for these services to operate every hour in each direction, and we support the infrastructure and rolling stock changes to achieve this. Extension of the service at each end of the existing route, namely to Didcot, Oxford and beyond in the Southern direction, and Salisbury, Southampton town and airport are also seen as critical to encourage modal shift to public transport for longer journeys. In the shorter term reliable and convenient connections to other locations such as Bath and London are required.

Working with GWR and Wiltshire Council, TransWilts CRP has developed an ambitious and detailed master plan for the Melksham station site using the results of consultation with local residents.

Specified in this master plan, several major improvements have been achieved:

- a station café and toilet have been provided by conversion of existing

buildings, and although currently closed, are key requirements to encourage train usage.

- Active train service information displays have been provided.
- Sufficient car parking and electric car charging for the next few years.

Further enhancements are planned/desirable summarised as:

- Reconfiguration of carriageway/footpath in order to add a bus stop, and rerouting of local and regional bus services through the station;
- Shared use pathway, pedestrian and cycle route to Foundry Close, providing convenient access to the east of Melksham via Scotland Road and Murray Walk;
- Stepped station access from Bath Road providing more convenient access to the west of Melksham, especially the Roundponds and George Ward Gardens areas.



The Melksham Transport User Group and other related organisations have put forward proposals for improvements to bus services in the Plan area. Key to these are:

- Routing services through the station forecourt
- Later evening services on all routes, but particularly the Chippenham/Trowbridge service which can provide a backup service if trains are disrupted
- More efficient scheduling of the town internal services. A trial of electric bus services for this purpose was held in 2022, and well received.





# Community Well-being and Nature



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

## **Policies in this section:**

Policy 12: Green Infrastructure

Policy 13: Biodiversity

Policy 14: Open Spaces

Policy 15: Community Facilities

Policy 16: Designation of Local Green Spaces



### Green Infrastructure

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

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

#### **Policy 12: Green Infrastructure**

**1. Development that will result in the creation of new Green Infrastructure (GI) and/or contribute to the protection, management, enhancement and connectivity of existing GI will be supported; the potential for GI within the Neighbourhood Area is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 12.**

#### **2. Proposals for major developments must:**

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

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

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

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

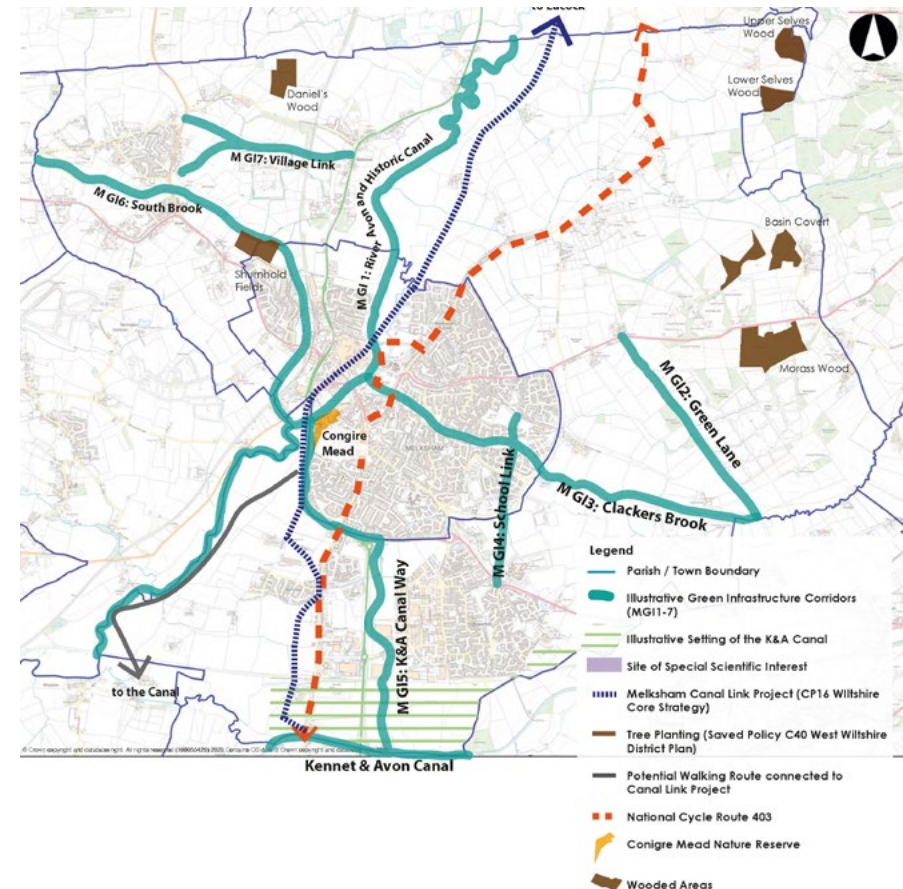
4.12.3 A diagrammatic representation of GI assets and their connectivity potential is shown in figure 12 as identified in the GI Evidence Base Report<sup>16</sup>. The report identifies local elements of GI with the aim of linking local sites and delivering connectivity of assets between and within different parts of the Plan area.

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

4.12.5 As GI is a priority, particularly as part of a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, the Parish and Town Councils encourage developers to seek to achieve a Building with Nature accreditation ([www.buildingwithnature.org.uk](http://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk)).

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

Figure 12: Diagrammatic Illustration of the Potential for Green Infrastructure (Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report V7)



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023



### Biodiversity

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

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

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

**Development proposals, including those for field based solar farms, will be expected to deliver a measurable biodiversity enhancements within and, where appropriate, beyond the site, in order to deliver tangible benefits for biodiversity, including specific attention for protected species.**

**Protection and enhancement of statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites (as shown on Figure 13) is a priority for the Neighbourhood Area and development proposals must demonstrate sensitive responses to these sites where necessary, such as accommodating a buffer zone.**

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

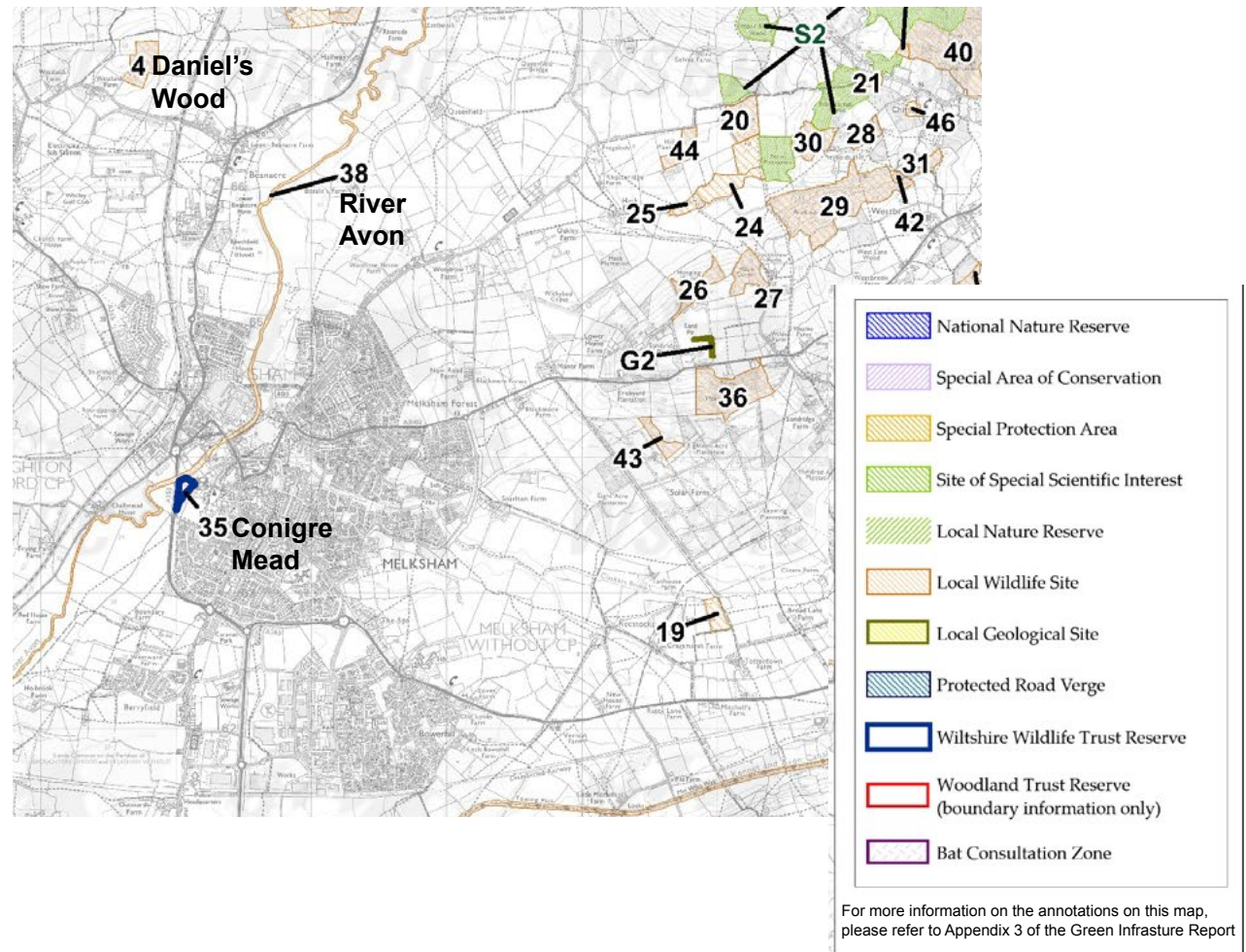
4.13.1 The Neighbourhood plan area is host to a range of wildlife sites and features which support the overall wildlife network and contribute to the well-being of wildlife and residents alike.

4.13.2 A full record of habitats and biodiversity information has been obtained from Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre, assembled using a mixture of field survey data and aerial photographic interpretation to compile a habitat inventory. This is available in full in the evidence base, and is summarised in the Green Infrastructure Report<sup>16</sup>, which adds Neighbourhood Plan level information to the biodiversity data. The map on the next page shows wildlife sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

4.13.3 Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) except for small sites, will have to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from a delayed start date of January 2024 . BNG will be required for small sites from April 2024. The Wiltshire Council Local Plan review through policy 89 (Biodiversity Net Gain) sets higher ambitions with a minimum of 20% BNG or higher.

Figure 13: Wildlife Sites (Note: the numbered sites on the map, produced by the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre can be found listed in appendix 3a of the Green Infrastructure evidence base report available on the website: [melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org](http://melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org))

4.13.4 Net gain is an approach that uses the planning process to leave biodiversity in a better state than it was before the development started, securing wider benefits for people and the environment, and is directly linked to the Government’s aim in its 25 Year Environment Plan to “leave the environment in a better state than we found it”.





### Melksham Canal Link Project

A key priority for the Plan area GI is the Melksham Link Project. The Wiltshire Core Strategy safeguards the route of the Melksham Link Canal in Core Policy 16. This policy safeguards the identified route (see Figure 9) for developing a canal link to the south west of the town between the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Avon, and to the north east of the town between the River Avon and the historic alignment of the Wilts & Berks Canal.

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

In 2012, a planning application for the Melksham Link was submitted, but this has not yet been determined, due to outstanding environmental concerns raised by the Environment Agency.

The scheme comprises: A junction with the Kennet & Avon canal at Semington / Around 3km of new canal to the west of Semington Rd, through Berryfield, with a lock and an aqueduct over Berryfield Brook. / New access roads and bridges at Berryfield. / Two further locks dropping down to a junction with the River Avon just west of the A350 Challymead road bridge. / A new weir across the River just downstream of this junction. / Re-profiling the river bed from this junction upstream under the Town Bridge to Melksham Gate weir. / A lock, adjacent to the weir with a hydro-electric generator on the island formed between the weir and the lock. / Towpath and footbridges to maintain existing footpaths and provide new pedestrian/cycle connection from the Kennet & Avon to the town and from the northern end to Lacock. / Mooring facilities for canal boats along the new canal and on the river near Town Bridge.

The project is being co-ordinated by the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust<sup>17</sup> in collaboration with funders who envisage how the canal will be delivered. The Town and Parish Councils would wish any associated development to be appropriate and in accordance with the vision and policies of this Plan.



### Open Spaces

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

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

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

**Development proposals that involve the whole or partial loss of an existing open space (other than designated Local Green Spaces) must demonstrate:**

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

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

4.14.1 As the NPPF makes clear, access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.

4.14.2 A distinctive characteristic of the town is the open spaces which punctuate the built environment, meaning that most residents are within walking distance of some open space. This key positive feature contributes to community well-being. The pandemic has highlighted what the evidence already demonstrated – the closer people live to accessible green space, the happier and healthier people are.

4.14.3 The Green Space Index is Fields in Trust's annual barometer of publicly accessible local park and green space provision ([experience.arcgis.com](https://experience.arcgis.com)). Other than Bowerhill, information from the Green Space Index in 2023 shows that our area does not meet the minimum standards of green space provision, though it also shows that there is generally good standard of access, with many people being within ten minutes walking distance of green spaces

across the area including King George V Park, Conigre Mead Nature Area, together with many other parks, and recreation grounds and play areas.

4.14.4 We also know that populations in our area will grow and this may negatively impact on the quantity of green space available to communities, unless provision is increased. Parks and green spaces are not a statutory service, meaning local councils have no obligation to provide them for their residents (though the provision is taken seriously by the town and parish council).

4.14.5 It should also be noted here, that a number of open spaces have been identified as meeting the tests for designation and protection against inappropriate development as Local Green Space (see pages 93-95). Educational open spaces are an example of an open space that cannot be designated as a Local Green Space, but are covered under this policy.

### Community Facilities

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

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

- 1. Development proposals that involve the loss, in whole or part, of a community facility (as identified in Figure 14a, b & c, and detailed in the Community Facilities Report<sup>19</sup>) must demonstrate that:**
  - a. adequate alternative provision exists or will be provided in an equally accessible or more accessible location, including by walking and cycling, within the catchment area of the facility; or**
  - b. it would not be economically viable, feasible or practicable to retain the building or site for use as a community facility; redevelopment for non-community use will only be considered as a last resort and where all other options have been exhausted.**
- 2. Proposals for new community facilities in the Plan area will be supported where the applicant can demonstrate the need and benefits of the proposed facility, or where replacement or enhanced facilities are proposed as mitigation against the loss of any community facilities within the Plan area.**
- 3. New or replacement community facilities should be located where there is a choice of travel options and should be accessible to all members of the community.**

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

4.15.1 Community facilities are defined by Wiltshire Council as those that serve settlements and include health, education and cultural infrastructure including uses such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, public houses and places of worship<sup>18</sup>.

4.15.2 The community facilities in the Plan area cover both rural and town areas. The existing community facilities in the Plan area as detailed in the Community Facilities Report<sup>19</sup> compiled by the Plan Steering Group are wide-ranging and can include community centres, public houses, cultural centres and venues, places of worship, education establishments and training centres and childcare facilities, health and social care facilities, sport and recreation facilities and civic and administrative facilities. However, the list and maps produced for the



Neighbourhood Plan cannot be said to be exhaustive (there are almost certainly more facilities than those included on the maps).

4.15.3 In August 2022 the new Community Campus opened. The Campus is a hub for community services, and provides a new library, swimming pool, sports hall, gym, dance studio and meeting rooms, amongst other facilities.

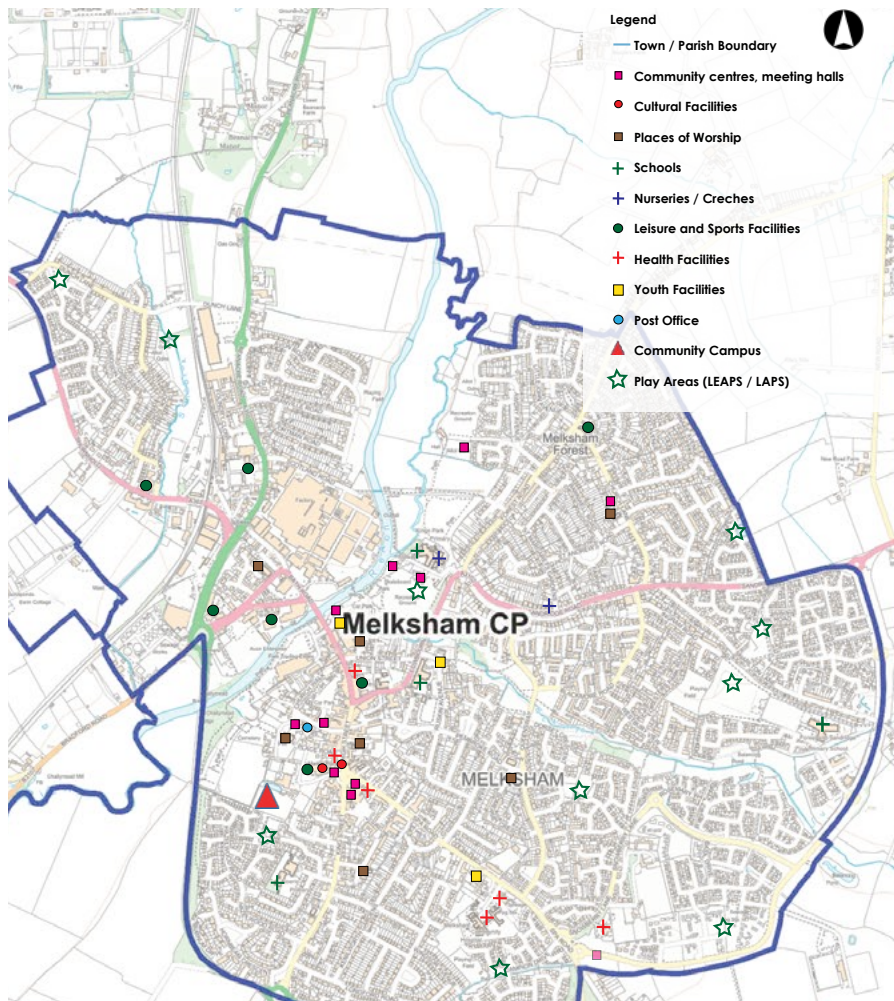
4.15.4 The primary function of some facilities is commercial (including pubs – a key facility in rural areas) but they also perform a clear role for the community in terms of sport, recreation or leisure provision.

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

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



Figure 14a: Melksham Town Community Facilities  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report V5)



4.15.7 The Community Facilities Evidence Base Report<sup>19</sup> sets out in detail the facilities in the Plan area. It is important that facilities for people of all ages are made available to support a diverse and healthy local population, and that these facilities are accessible to residents, as far as possible using sustainable modes of transport.

4.15.8 Proposals for partnership working with national or local agencies to develop strategic community facilities to meet the identified needs for the people living in and around the Plan area will continue.

© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023



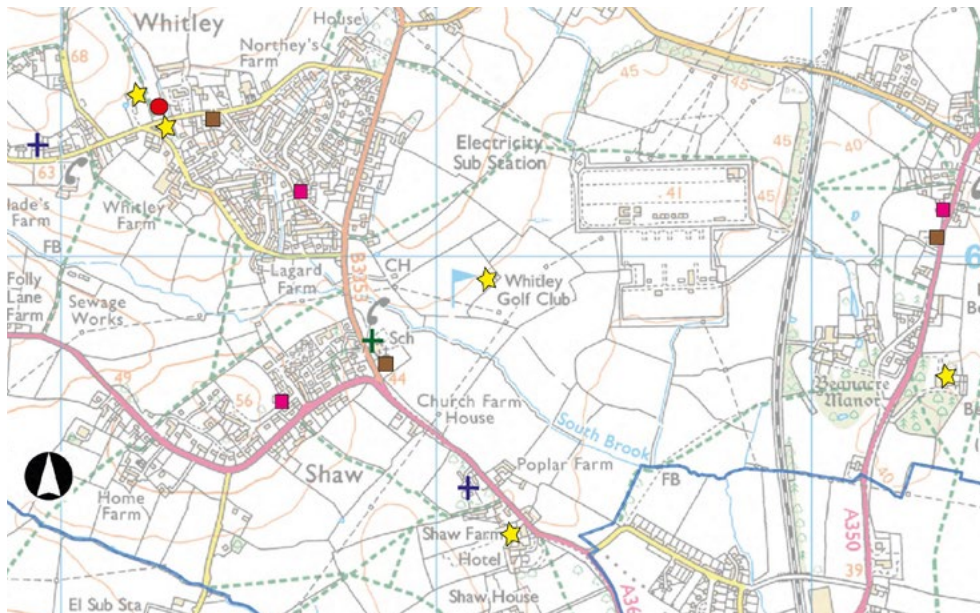


Figure 14b: Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre Community Facilities  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report V5)

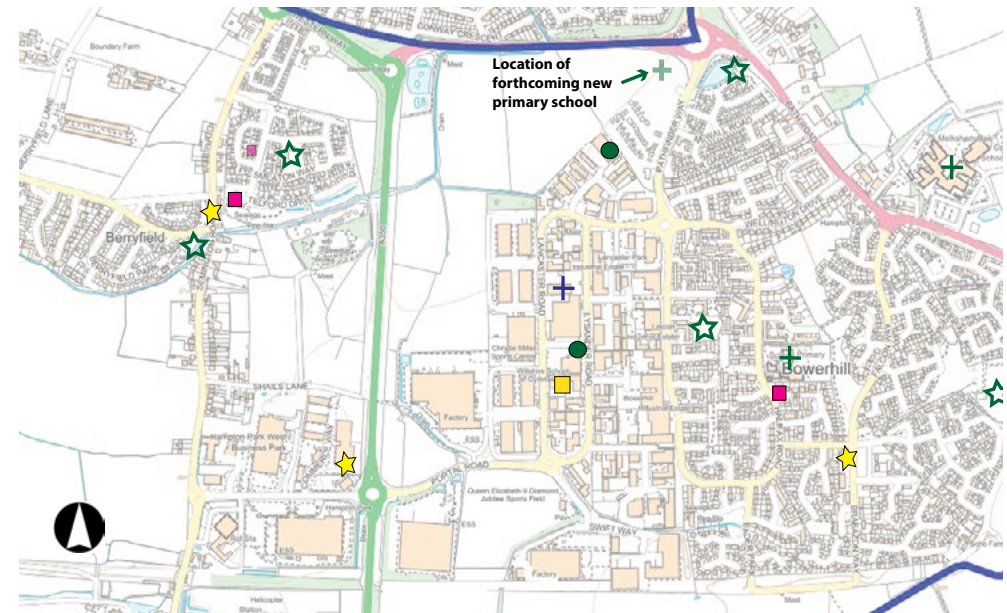


Figure 14c: Bowerhill and Berryfield Community Facilities  
(Source: Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report V5)

Figures 14a, 14b and 14c not to scale, please refer to map on previous page for key and Community Facilities Report<sup>19</sup> for further information on facilities. One additional type of facility is noted in the rural areas – pubs denoted by a star ★

### Local Green Spaces

**This policy also helps meet objective 11:** Protecting, connecting and increasing our network of green spaces.

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

#### **Policy 16: Designation of Local Green Spaces**

**The sites shown on figure 15, and listed on page 95 are designated as Local Green Spaces, and will be protected from inappropriate development in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt.**

**These spaces will be protected from built development, except in very special circumstances and where the proposals enhance the existing use of the space, particularly regarding the characteristics that underpin designation as Local Green Space.**

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

4.16.1 The NPPF sets out the context for Local Green Space (LGS) designation which provides special protection against development for green areas of importance to communities. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF sets clear criteria that the designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty,

historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and  
c) where the green area is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

4.16.2 Interactive online community outreach to identify potential LGS nominations was undertaken during May and June 2022. This was supplemented by an opportunity to validate or add nominations at community drop-in events and online consultation during February and March 2023.

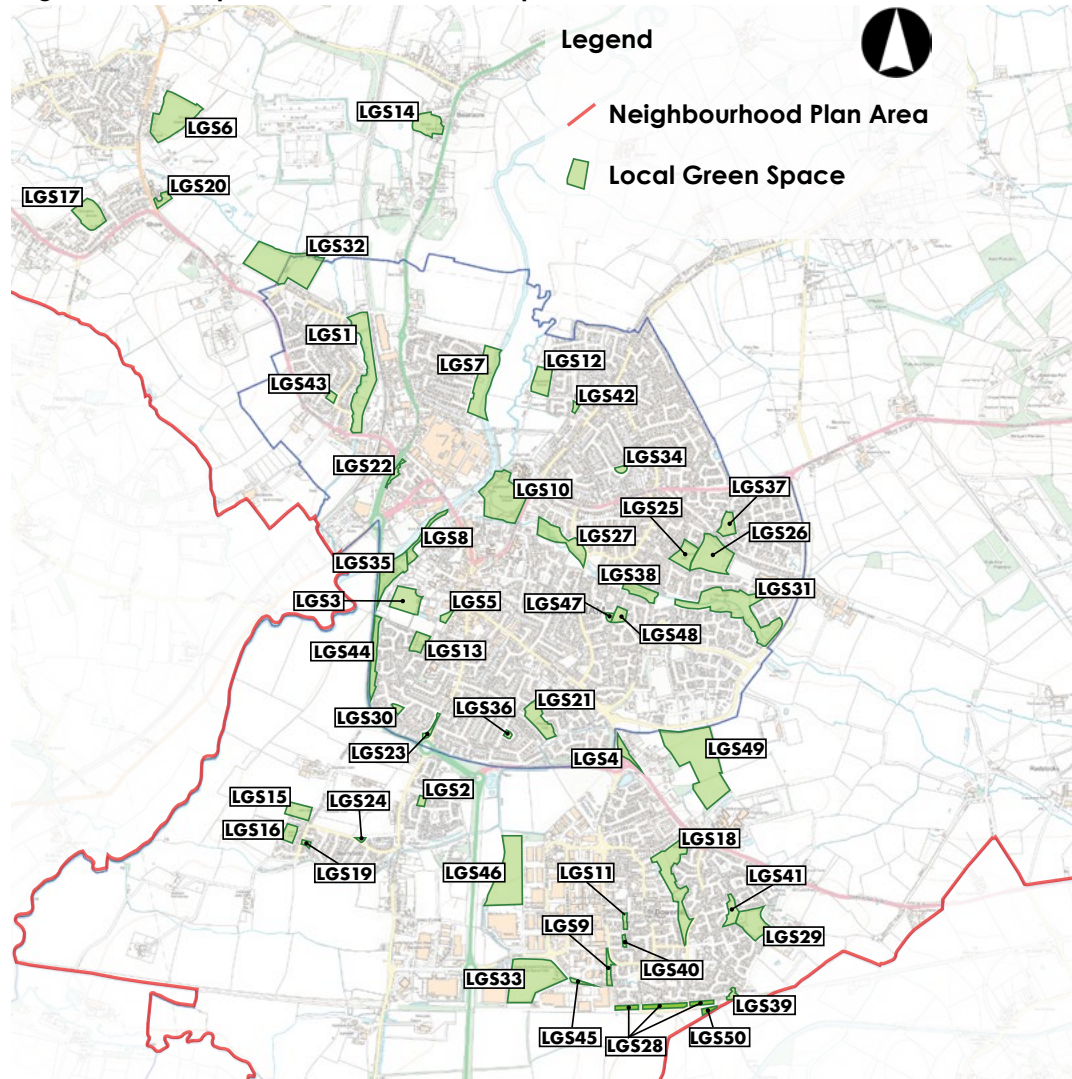
4.16.3 Where sites met the NPPF criteria, and were assessed in line with planning practice guidance<sup>20</sup> including whether there were site allocations or planning permissions which would prevent designations, all owners of the shortlisted sites were contacted to secure their early input into the designation process.

4.16.4 From 250 suggestions from the first community consultation, a working group assessed potential sites to finally arrive at 50 sites proposed for LGS designation.

4.16.5 A full explanation of the methodology, evidence and justification to support the designations, along with maps of each LGS can be found in the Local Green Spaces Evidence Base Report 2023.



Figure 15: Proposed Local Green Spaces



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420) 2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

Individual site maps can be seen in the Local Green Space Report

### Proposed Local Green Spaces

1. Land along Roundponds following South Brook
2. Bowood View
3. Recreational ground and cricket field to rear of The Campus
4. Copse area in The Spa
5. Approach to Melksham House
6. Cricket and field – community area, Whitley
7. Riverside Drive Green/Woodland Areas
8. Natural woodland area near Sainsburys
9. Land between Duxford Close and the boundary of the industrial estate
10. King George V Playing Fields and recreation area
11. Beverley Close Greenspace
12. Forest Community Centre playing field/sports pitches
13. Hazelwood Road Play Area (Brunswick Park)
14. St Barnabas Church, Cricket Field
15. Berryfield Allotments North (Briansfield Allotments)
16. Berryfield Allotments South (Berryfield Allotments)
17. Shaw Playing Fields “The Beeches”
18. Rear of Grasmere and Wellington Drive
19. Green in Berryfield Lane
20. Shaw Churchyard
21. Field/Old Sports Pitch (to rear of Melksham Hospital & Champion Drive)
22. Weavers Crofts
23. Hornbeam Crescent/Semington Road
24. Berryfield Green triangle
25. Foresters Park Road playing fields
26. Cranesbill Road playing fields
27. Clackers Brook (Queensway)
28. Brabazon Way
29. Hornchurch Road Public Open Space
30. Hornbeam Crescent green
31. East of Melksham (Clackers Brook)
32. Shurnhold Fields
33. Bowerhill Sports Field
34. The Crays
35. Conigre Nature Reserve
36. Sarum Avenue
37. Skylark Green
38. Primrose Nature Reserve
39. Locking Close
40. Beaufort Close to Kestrel Court
41. Harvard Close
42. Awdry Avenue
43. Roundponds
44. Walkway parallel to A350 (rear of Hornbeam Crescent)
45. Verge with stream and trees (Swift Way, Bowerhill)
46. Fields/old golf course (behind Christie Miller)
47. Dorset Crescent play area/green
48. Primrose Drive play area/green
49. Dog Walking Area to the Rear of The Spa
50. Locking Close Allotments



# Natural and Built Environment



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

## **Policies in this section:**

Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows

Policy 18: Landscape Character

Policy 19: Green Wedges

Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Policy 21: Local Heritage



### Trees and Hedgerows

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

#### **Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows**

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

**To be supported, development proposals should ensure that there will be no loss or deterioration of the irreplaceable habitats of ancient woodlands (as shown in Figure 16) and ancient or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. A minimum buffer of at least 15 metres in width should be maintained between ancient woodland and any development boundary. A buffer zone around an ancient or veteran tree should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree.**

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

**To be supported, development proposals should ensure that there is no damage to or loss of trees of good arboricultural and amenity value. Existing trees and hedgerows on development sites should be retained where possible and incorporated as**

**placemaking features in new development. Where there is an unavoidable loss of trees on site, the number and type of replacement trees should be informed by the quality and size of trees lost. Integration of existing hedgerows into private curtilage must be avoided where possible.**

##### **New Trees:**

**New tree planting in development proposals and throughout the built and natural environments of the Plan area will be supported in principle. Development proposals are encouraged to aim for 20% tree canopy coverage on site where possible – in gardens and in streets.**

### The reason for the policy

4.17.1 As set out in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report<sup>16</sup>, trees are a key asset of the Plan area and there is an ambition to increase tree coverage across the community. Overall tree canopy coverage in the area is estimated to be an average of just over 12% which has been mapped using the i-tree canopy tool<sup>21</sup>. The Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Network recommends 'a minimum standard for tree canopy cover is set for a local area, with evidence showing that 20% is a good aspiration'<sup>22</sup>. As part of a local response to climate change, place making and achieving local distinctiveness: In Shurnhold Fields, 200 trees planted for WW1 commemoration along with a native rare species orchard, and most recently the community in Shaw and Whitley to plan to plant their own trees. In Melksham town, another intensive residents tree planting scheme will be carried out in November 2023 in the town.

4.17.2 There are a number of areas of ancient woodland across the Plan area, including Daniel's Wood, Morass Wood and Hanging Wood (ancient replanted). This is significant as ancient woodlands now cover just 2.4% of the UK. Standing Advice from Natural England and the Forestry Commission guide planning decisions that relate to ancient and veteran trees.



### The Importance of Trees

- Trees naturally absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, a key greenhouse gas removing 4 million tonnes of it from the atmosphere every year.
- Local air quality is improved as trees cut the level of airborne particulates and absorb nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone
- Nearby trees and reenspaces can increase property value of 15 - 18%. The larger the trees the greater their proportional value.
- Tree cover across England is 12.8%, of which 10% is woodland.
- The Woodland Trust recommend an increase in UK woodland as part of the way to tackle biodiversity and climate crises.
- Existing tree cover is being mapped as part of the approach to increasing tree cover. Friends of the Earth also advocate that planting more street trees, forests and hedgerows one of the best solutions to protect our environment and achieve net zero. See their [website for an "opportunity map" of areas in England that may be suitable for creating woodlands](#) - this includes areas in Melksham and Melksham Without.

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

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

Below: Tree Replacement Standard Methodology

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

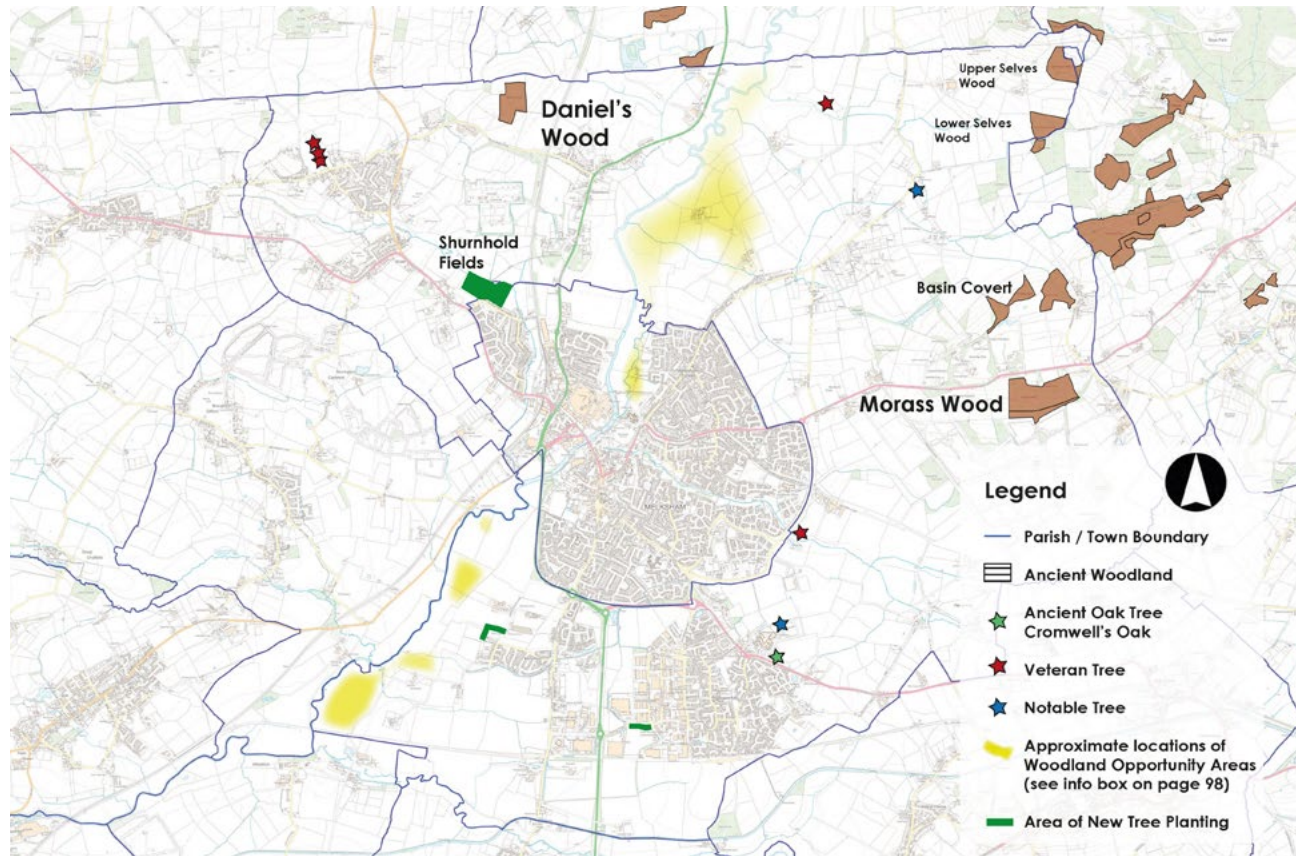
4.17.5 Hedgerows, like trees, can make an important contribution to the character and can also be important historically as indications of land use and previous ownership. They also contribute significantly to biodiversity and amenity value of the natural and, in places, built environment. Trees will also help with adaptation to the effects of climate change.

4.17.6 Where tree loss is unavoidable, the Tree Replacement Standard can be used to inform the number of replacement trees. Whilst a particular site or design approach to trees will inform the number and approach to tree planting, the Standard is a established methodology used by Bristol City Council<sup>23</sup>.





Figure 16: Ancient Trees, Ancient Woodland and Areas of New Tree Planting (Source: Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Report)



© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100055420)  
2023, Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023

### Landscape Character

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

#### Policy 18: Landscape Character

Development proposals will be expected to:

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

#### The reason for the policy

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

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



Bridge across the River Avon

of openness, to areas that are much more enclosed with lines of trees along the river Avon. As the land rises to the north east there is an area that was once designated in the West Wiltshire Local Plan as a 'Special Landscape Area'.

4.18.3 Key characteristics of the landscape of the Plan area are detailed in the Green Infrastructure Report<sup>16</sup> and the Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report<sup>24</sup> which supplements Landscape Character Assessment work done by Wiltshire Council with local detail. Some key points are:

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

a link and connection with the built environment of the town. South Brook to the north west, meanders through agricultural fields between the two villages of Shaw and Whitley, contributing to the separate identity and character of the two villages and to local amenity, with a number of footpaths criss-crossing the area.

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

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



### Landscape Green Gaps and Wedges

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

#### **Policy 19: Green Wedges**

**Within designated Green Wedges (mapped in Figure 17), development will only be supported where it:**

- a. does not individually or cumulatively result in coalescence or loss of separate identity or character of individual settlements;**
- b. maintains the generally open character of the countryside;**
- c. minimises urbanising effects, such as artificial lighting and traffic movements;**
- d. retains important elements of the rural landscape such as trees and hedgerows; and**
- e. does not adversely impact the existing landscape and recreational value of the countryside.**

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

4.19.1 When places merge together that were once separate it is known as 'coalescence'. Green wedges (or buffers) have been successfully used in local and neighbourhood plans to prevent the coalescence of villages/towns, and to protect local character and identity. Green wedges are also of multi-functional benefit as spaces for flood protection, climate change mitigation, agriculture, biodiversity and recreation etc.

4.19.2 In recent years, extensive new housing development has been approved across the Neighbourhood Area. Some of this development has had the effect of increasing the perceived or actual coalescence between formerly free-standing settlements, each with their own history, character, and identity. Such development was in some cases permitted contrary to relevant policy in the Wiltshire Core Strategy because the Council was unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, meaning the Core Strategy policies carried less weight, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in NPPF paragraph 14.

4.19.3 Wiltshire Council, through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) provides

information on a range of potential housing sites and sites for other uses, which gives an indication of how development requirements could potentially be met on the ground. The SHELAA and a separate Call for Sites carried out by the Steering Group of the Neighbourhood Plan to inform this update of the Plan, clearly indicate that land continues to be promoted for development in locations where coalescence could result if an application were consented.

4.19.4 As more development is accommodated in the Plan area, Green Wedges can help prevent (further) erosion of local character and identity that can happen. The protection of certain areas of countryside outside settlement boundaries as green wedges can help prevent (further) erosion of local character and identity arising from ‘coalescence’ or the merging together of places that were once separate. Developments can contribute to coalescence both individually and cumulatively. Further details on green wedges are set out in the JMNP Green Gap and Wedge Study (2023) which underpins this policy.

4.19.5 The areas designated as green wedges are proportionate in scale to the settlements they separate and have clearly-defined boundaries based on physical features.

4.19.6 Shaw, Whitley, Beanacre, Bowerhill, Berryfield and Melksham town itself each retain a unique character, history

and sense of place derived from their landscape settings as recognisably distinct built-up areas, distinguishable from other neighbouring settlements by intervening countryside.

4.19.7 The JMNP Green Gap and Wedge Study also found that Bowerhill and the village of Semington in the neighbouring Parish to the south, exhibit distinct characters. The existing land between them is open, prevents their coalescence and is considered to provide the function of a green wedge. The southern extent of the boundary follows a clear landscape feature of high sensitivity – the Kennet & Avon Canal. Co-ordinated work has taken place between Semington Neighbourhood Plan and the JMNP as two separate but adjacent Neighbourhood Plan Areas, and both Plans seek to protect this area. It has therefore been included as a green wedge area.

### What is the SHELAA?

The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) provides information on a range of potential housing sites and sites for other uses, which gives an indication of how Wiltshire’s development requirements could potentially be met on the ground. The SHELAA is required by national policy.

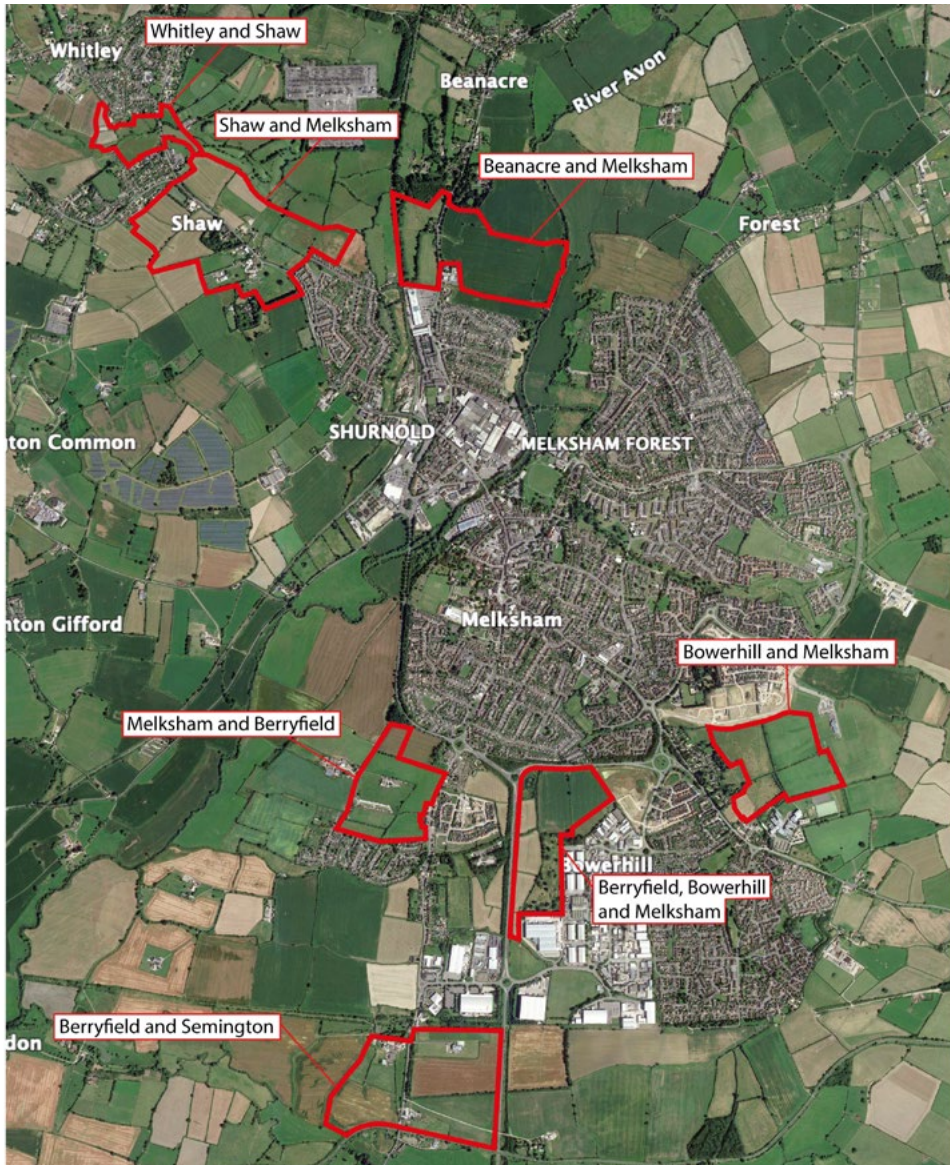


Figure 17: Green Wedges

Map credit: JMNP Green Gap and Wedge Study 2023 Imagery © 2023 Google Maps Airbus, Getmapping plc, infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, Map data 2023



### Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

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

#### **Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design**

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

**In addition to having regard to the National Design Guidance and Wiltshire Council design policy, development proposals must demonstrate how they have been informed by the adopted Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023), therefore how they have responded positively to the history and character of the area in which the site is located.**

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

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

4.20.1 The character and quality of Melksham's environment is defined by its heritage, landscape and green and blue infrastructure and accessibility, as much as by the design of its buildings.

4.20.2 This policy addresses matters of development layout, form, materials and detailing. Design proposals should address all other Neighbourhood Plan policies, in particular those relating to Sustainable Design (Policy 1), G.I (Policy 12), landscape (Policy 17) and local heritage (Policy 21) to achieve a responsive and successful proposal.

4.20.3 Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council recognise the importance of design quality to local distinctiveness and quality of life. In addition to expecting development proposals to respond positively to national design guidance and be in conformity with Wiltshire Core Strategy/ Local Plan design policy, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure development in the Plan area is designed to complement and strengthen local quality of place, character and distinctiveness.

4.20.4 The second Neighbourhood Plan is therefore now supported by Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes Document (AECOM 2023). Those proposing or assessing any development should use this resource to inform the design of schemes or assessment feedback. Figure 19 illustrates the different character areas found in the Plan area, and detailed in the Document.

4.20.6 Part 12 of NPPF sets out importance of design in the planning and development process and sets out the role of communities in achieving 'good design': "Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics" (NPPF, Para 125).

4.20.7 The 2021 update of the NPPF also underscores the importance of high quality design: "the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental

to what the planning and development process should achieve.

4.20.8 In 2019 the Government published a 'National Design Guide' which highlights the importance of understanding and responding to local character (in many senses). Figure 18 illustrates the 10 components of good design as set out in the National Design Guide<sup>25</sup>. The importance of design is also underscored

by the summer of 2020 update of Building for Life<sup>12</sup><sup>26</sup>, an industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods: Building for a Healthy Life (BHL).



Figure 18: 10 components of good design (MHCLG 2019)

Figure 19: Character Areas  
(source: Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes)

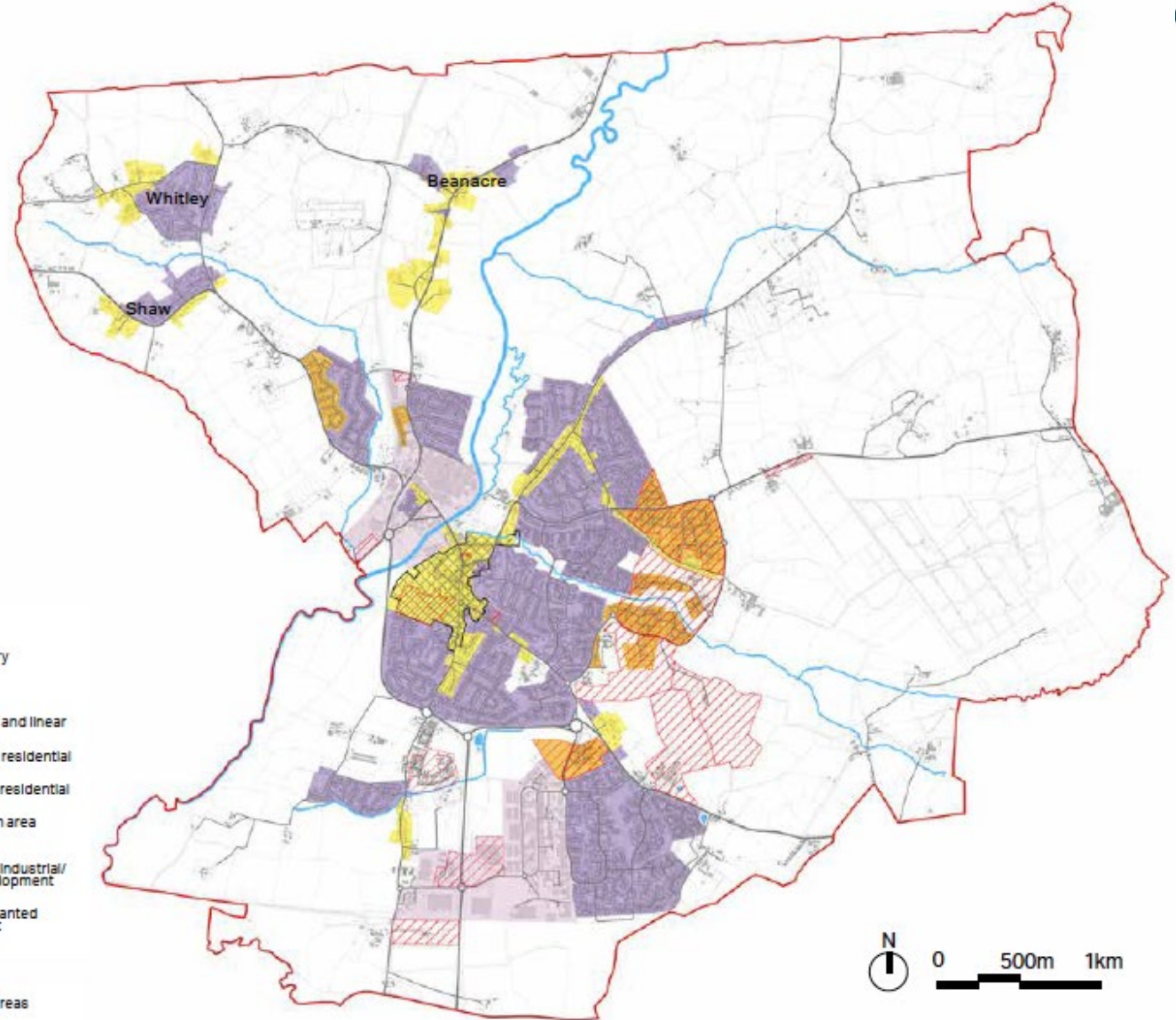


Figure 19: Character areas



### Local Heritage

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

#### **Policy 21: Local Heritage**

**Proposals for development within the Melksham Conservation Area and those that may affect listed buildings or structures within the Neighbourhood Plan area, must show how they preserve or enhance the setting, characteristics and special qualities that make up the architectural and historic character.**

**For other areas of local heritage importance, including archaeological importance, and buildings or structures identified as Non-designated Heritage Assets mapped on Figure 20 (including notable buildings as shown on Figure 21) development proposals should demonstrate that appropriate consideration has been given to:**

- a. the significance of the heritage asset;**
- b. its most distinctive and important features;**
- c. the elements of its setting and immediate surrounds that contribute to its significance, and**
- d. the contribution the asset and its setting makes to the character of the local area (whether in a Conservation Area or not).**

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

4.21.1 There are over 70 listed buildings in the parish, 19 in Whitley, 16 in Shaw and 19 in Beanacre. There are over 150 in the town, the majority of the latter being in the Melksham Town Conservation Area. There is, however, no Conservation Area Assessment or Management Plan to guide and inform conservation, future development and investment. Town Centre masterplanning work has however identified important heritage features, including 'noteworthy' buildings – these are historic buildings that contribute to the character of the area.

4.21.2 Outside of the town centre conservation area there are two key areas of heritage importance – The City and The Spa.

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

4.21.4 The area of housing for industrial workers known as 'The City' is likely to date from the 17th Century when the town

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

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

4.22.5 Alongside listed buildings and structures, which are nationally protected historic 'assets', there are also other historic features that contribute to the local character, and the unique history of Melksham and the wider parish. Through the Neighbourhood Plan, locally important heritage assets can be listed in order that the significance of any building or site on the list can be better taken into account in planning applications affecting the building or site or its setting.

Planning protections for non-designated heritage assets are not as strong as those for designated heritage assets, but they are still important. Inclusion on a local heritage list based on sound evidence and criteria delivers a consistent and accountable way of recognising non-designated heritage assets, to the benefit of good planning for the area and of owners, developers and others wishing to understand local context fully.

4.21.6 Community outreach to identify potential non-designated local heritage asset nominations was undertaken during May and June 2022. This was supplemented by an opportunity to validate or add nominations at community drop-in events and online consultation during February and March 2023, together with Steering Group research.

4.21.7 Nominations that were put forward were assessed using Historic England criteria set out in Advice Note 7 Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage.

4.21.8 The Historic Environment Record was accessed as part of the evidence base for the plan and has been drawn on in the preparation of this Policy.

## Locally Valued Non-Designated Heritage Assets Draft List

1. Avon Rubber Company Canteen
2. Whitley Reading Rooms
3. Gospel St John 316 Graveyard
4. The Bear Public House
5. Liberal Club (originally: Melksham Liberal Working Men's Club and Institute)
6. Old HSBC bank building
7. Lloyds Bank Building
8. New Hall
9. Kelly's Lamp
10. WW2 Air Raid Shelter
11. 18-26 Bath Road
12. Remains of Well and pump in Market Place
13. High Pavement, Bank Street
14. RAF Melksham
15. Pathfinder Way Public Art
16. RAF Commemorative Stones
17. Old Ex RAF Lamppost
18. Avonside Chimney and distinctive roofline
19. Parts of former Wilts & Berks Canal
20. Wilts & Berks Canal bridge parapet

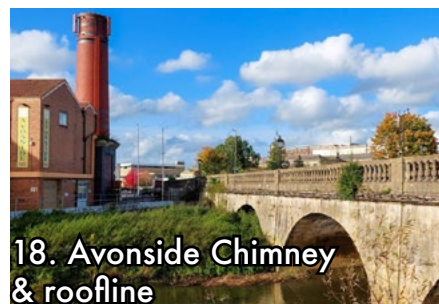


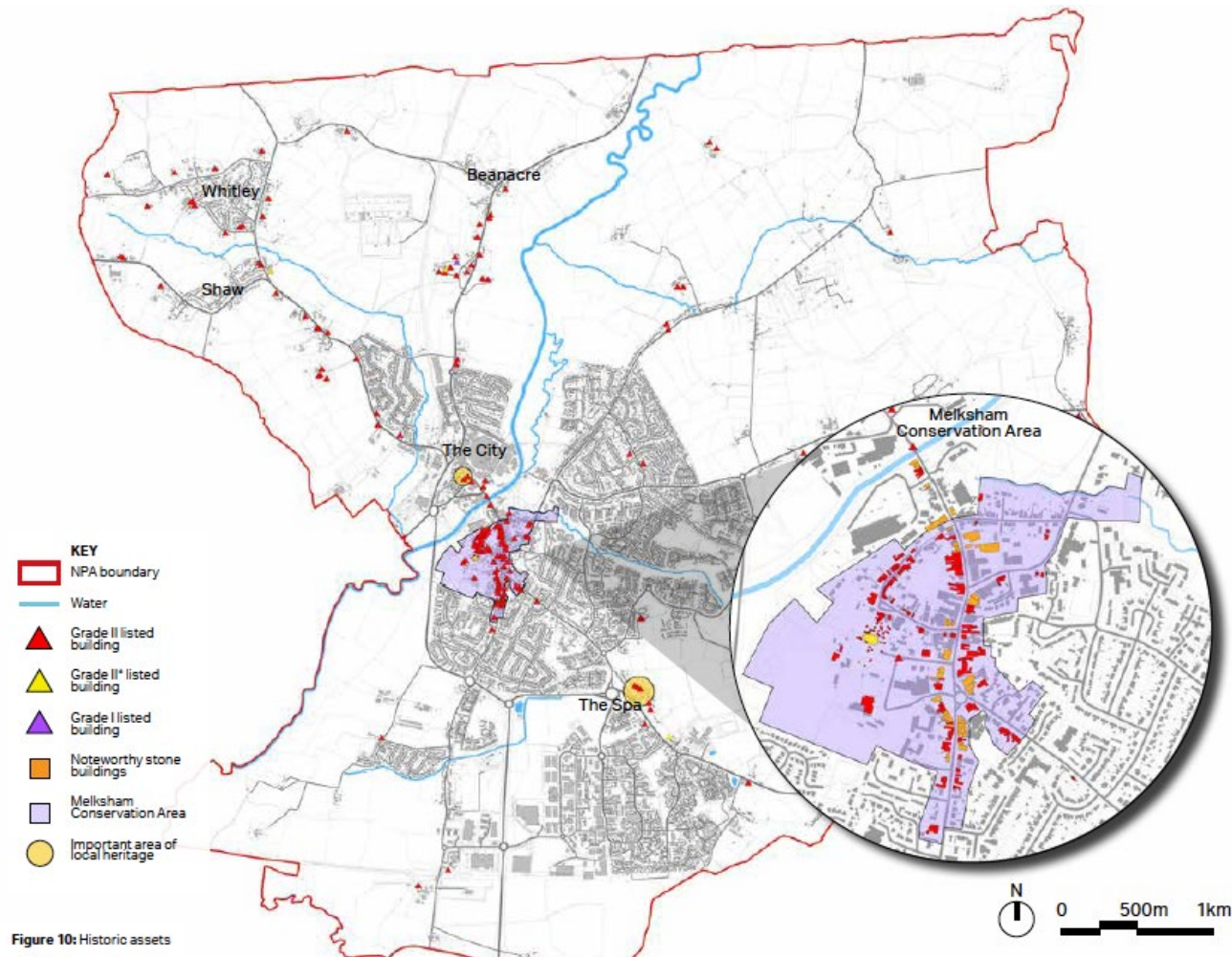
Figure 20: Locally Valued Non-Designated Heritage Assets



Map credit: Imagery © 2023 Google Maps Airbus, Getmapping plc, infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, Map data 2023



Figure 21: Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, Notable Buildings and Important Areas of Local Heritage  
 (source: Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes)



# 5 Priority Statements



Priority statements illustrate the commitment of the two Councils to bring their influence to bear on matters outside the remit and scope of this Neighbourhood Plan either because they are strategic in nature or address issues beyond this Neighbourhood Plan time period. These 'statements' are not presented in any order of priority.

## **Priority Statement 1: Transport Infrastructure – Bypass**

The potential Melksham bypass is a strategic transportation project, an issue outside of the Neighbourhood Plan scope. It is included in this section as a priority statement due to its local importance.

The Melksham scheme would bypass the town centre and in turn resolve a critical pinch-point on the A350, improving North to South connectivity throughout the Western Gateway. It could be a part of a package of road improvement measures that will improve the Northern section of this North-South route.

It has the potential to improve the efficiency of the A350 as well as improve the local economy and quality of the environment within Melksham and Beanacre and assist in meeting Neighbourhood Plan objectives.

The Town and Parish Councils will support efforts by Wiltshire Council to progress the delivery of a bypass, although it must be noted central Government and Wiltshire Council's commitment to, and route of, a bypass is unresolved at the time of making of this plan. Support for the progression of the project does not assume the support of both the Town council and/or the Parish Council will be given to any final proposed scheme.

## **Priority Statement 2 : Levels of Growth and Infrastructure**

Wiltshire Council and the Local Plan is responsible for the allocation of strategic housing and employment sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area and development management processes associated with proposals for their development.

The Town and Parish Councils are seriously concerned that housing developments recently consented and delivered within the JMNP2 area have not been accompanied by adequate infrastructure. Both Councils will continue to seek to ensure that new large scale development is accompanied by the provision of sufficient, integrated community and sustainable development infrastructure, including healthcare facilities, schools and highways and sustainable transport infrastructure and open space, which have come under increasing demand.

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

The Neighbourhood Plan cannot direct how Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) raised through housing development and held by Wiltshire Council are spent. However the community infrastructure levy receipts passed to either Melksham Town Council or Melksham Without Parish Council will be used to address the increased demands that new development places on the civic infrastructure, for the benefit of the Joint Neighbourhood Plan area, focusing on the facilities/infrastructure and communities most impacted by the new development.

### **Memorandum of Agreement**

A Memorandum of Agreement is in place between Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Town Council setting out the terms for the sharing of CIL funds, or any replacement funding system. The Memorandum of Agreement will include a Statement of Priorities for infrastructure needs and civic amenity projects which will be reviewed annually and agreed jointly between the Town and Parish Councils. Interdependence can therefore follow through into the appropriate distribution of CIL monies.



### **Priority Statement 3: Wilts & Berks Canal Restoration**

The Town and Parish Council continue to support the safeguarding of the future route for the restoration of the Wilts & Berks canal and its connection to the Kennet & Avon canal and the national canal network.

The opening of a fully restored waterway will provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits to Melksham

Both Councils will continue to engage openly and constructively with the canal restoration project sponsors towards the aim of resolving a viable and acceptable scheme.

### **Priority Statement 4: Progressing Town Centre Master Plan Area Regeneration**

The Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan sites assessment and allocation process identified a number of town centre and edge of centre sites that were made available sites that have not been allocated. These include The former Blue Pool, Avonside Enterprise Park, Unicorn Public House and the former Lloyds Bank building. The Town Centre Master Plan Report also identified opportunity sites that were not made available for allocation within the three regeneration “cluster” areas:

- Cluster 1 The Campus and Market Place Civic and Cultural Quarter
- Cluster 2 The Old Library, Labour Club and Lowbourne area

- Cluster 3 Avon Riverside, Cooper Tires, The City and the Railway Station

Melksham Town Council will continue to work with stakeholders and the community to progress the delivery of prioritised town centre and edge of centre regeneration and enhancement initiatives identified in the Town Centre Master Plan Report (2023).

Where proposals will contribute positively towards delivering Neighbourhood Plan objectives and the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre, it will give support to proposals for enhancement or regeneration of town centre and edge of town centre sites including those not specifically allocated by the JMNP or made available for allocation.

# Glossary

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

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

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

**Brownfield land:** See previously developed land

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

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

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

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

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

**Ecological networks:** These link sites of biodiversity importance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**NPPF:** National Planning Policy Framework.

The overall planning policy produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

**NPPG or PPG:** Planning Practice Guidance.

The overall national planning practice guidance and advice produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

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

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



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

**Market Housing:** Private housing for rent or sale where the price is set in the open market.

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

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

**Previously developed land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by

agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill.

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

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

**Sequential Test (Town Centre):** The Sequential Test ensures that a sequential approach is followed to steer new development to areas in the most sustainable location. This requires that applications for main town centre uses (e.g. shops) should be

located in town centre locations. If that is not possible, then they should be located in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered.

**SHELAA:** The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is a process that we carry out to find possible land for development.

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

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

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.wiltshireintelligence.org.uk/topics/census/> accessed July 2023
- <sup>2</sup> [https://lichfields.uk/media/5115/lichfields-insight-focus\\_solutions-to-an-age-old-problem-in-the-south-west.pdf](https://lichfields.uk/media/5115/lichfields-insight-focus_solutions-to-an-age-old-problem-in-the-south-west.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Wiltshire Council Employment Land Review 2018
- <sup>4</sup> Wiltshire Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, February 2019
- <sup>5</sup> IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
- <sup>6</sup> Committee on Climate Change (Feb 2019). UK housing: Fit for the future? [www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/UKhousing-Fit-for-the-future-CCC-2019.pdf](http://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/UKhousing-Fit-for-the-future-CCC-2019.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Schaller, N. et al. (2016) Human influence on climate in the 2014 southern England winter floods and their impacts. *Nature Climate Change*, 6(6), p.627.
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/consulting-ending-sale-new-petrol-diesel-and-hybrid-cars-and-vans>
- <sup>10</sup> Department for Transport, 2018: The Road to Zero Next steps towards cleaner roads transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy
- <sup>11</sup> Appendix 6 of the 2020 Housing Land Supply Statement (Wiltshire Council, 2020) which shows the position at April 2019
- <sup>12</sup> Additional Rural Site Assessments 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>13</sup> The priorities for CIL spending by Wiltshire Council are specified in the 'Regulation 123 List (2016)'. It sets out priorities for CIL funding in the Melksham area: Improvements to Melksham railway station/ Installation of intermediate signals on the single track rail line through Melksham/Expansion of existing cemetery in Melksham
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-report-final.pdf>, <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-appendix-7-site-review-summaryspreadsheets-final.pdf> (see sites 68-79), <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wilts-elr-appendix-9-site-reviews.pdf> (sites throughout).
- <sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/cyclingguidance/sustrans\\_handbook\\_for\\_cycle-friendly\\_design.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/cyclingguidance/sustrans_handbook_for_cycle-friendly_design.pdf)
- <sup>16</sup> Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report V7, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>17</sup> Wilts and Berks Canal Trust Melksham Canal Link <https://www.wbct.org.uk/mcc-projects/melksham-link>
- <sup>18</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/f8442ee21e894fb2a31912499ebfa37f?item=6>
- <sup>19</sup> Community Facilities Evidence Base Report, 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/i-tree-eco/uk-urban-canopy-cover/>
- <sup>22</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/709464/FR\\_FC\\_TreeCanopyData\\_leaflet.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/709464/FR_FC_TreeCanopyData_leaflet.pdf)
- <sup>23</sup> Guidance on the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard can be found on this page <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-regulations/planning-policy-and-guidance/supplementary-planning-documents-practice-notes-and-other-planning-guidance>
- <sup>24</sup> Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report 2020, part of the evidence base produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, available at Melksham Neighbourhood Plan website <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/>
- <sup>25</sup> National Design Guide 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>
- <sup>26</sup> Building for a Healthy life <https://www.designforhomes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/14JULY20-BFL-2020-Brochure.pdf>



## List of Figures

Figure 1: Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Area

Figure 2: Rail and Key Roads Routes

Figure 3: Neighbourhood Area Settlements and Neighbourhoods

Figure 4: Major planning permissions granted during the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2015) period (at August 2023)

Figure 5: Strategy Overview

Figure 6: Cooper Tires Redline Plan

Figure 7: Library Site Redline Plan

Figure 8: Land at Whitley Farm Redline Plan

Figure 9: Land at Middle Farm Redline Plan

Figure 10: Town Centre

Figure 11: Key Routes for Walking and Cycling

Figure 12: Diagrammatic Illustration of the Potential for Green Infrastructure

Figure 13: Wildlife Sites within the Neighbourhood Area

Figure 14a: Melksham Town Community Facilities

Figure 14b: Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre Community Facilities

Figure 14c: Bowerhill and Berryfield Community Facilities

Figure 15: Local Green Spaces

Figure 16: Ancient Trees, Woodland and Areas of New Tree Planting

Figure 17: Green Wedges

Figure 19: Character Areas

Figure 20: Locally Valued Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Figure 21: Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Important Areas of Local Heritage

# Appendix 1

## Community Engagement Protocol



### Introduction

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

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

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

### Context

#### National

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

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

The “10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement” (Local Government Association, 2014) published nationally by a group representing planning, industry and community groups, states that:

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

## Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2020 states that it encourages:

*"developers and applicants to engage with local people and communities including Town and Parish Councils and with neighbours, when appropriate, before submission of a planning application. ... The government have stated that such engagement is discretionary, but it is strongly encouraged by the Council prior to the submission of applications for ten or more houses, or other large developments on sites of 1 hectare or more."*

The SCI outlines in detail how communities can be involved in planning applications. It is acknowledged that whilst in the early stages of considering a development proposal, applicants may wish for any discussions with Wiltshire Council to be confidential, involvement of the local community can and should happen at the earliest possible stage.

## Process

Whilst there is an emphasis on early and positive pre-application engagement in major development proposals, the approach should also apply to smaller developments in the plan area because these can have at least as much impact as larger ones. Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council will play

their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application engagement with themselves and with the wider community in the early stage of proposals that come forward.

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

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

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, potential applicants should work with Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council to fulfil the following principles:

- **'Day One' contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with the relevant Council, and through us with our local community, at the earliest possible point in the process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes



is not productive. See the end of this Protocol for contact details for the Town and Parish Council. Wiltshire Council are also asked by the Town and Parish Council to pass on contact details to applicants.

- **Agreed Process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timetable, information and so forth of the engagement – i.e. the process to be followed. This should have particular regard to if and how both Councils should be involved in the process as noted above. For major development applications this will include Wiltshire Council.
- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant’s role to lead and fund engagement, the Town and/or Parish Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process; for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Town and/or Parish Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the Town and/or Parish as appropriate. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential ways

to contact and engage them.

- **Agreed Scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- **Proportionality:** The nature and scale of engagement will be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals, for example small householder applications are very unlikely to need to undertake more than neighbour consultations.
- **Statement of Community Consultation:** For major development proposals applications, a statement of community consultation should be submitted. This should describe and summarise the outcomes of the engagement, demonstrating how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been followed fully, the Parish Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it\*. For smaller development proposals, a short statement describing and summarising the outcomes of the engagement is encouraged.

### Contact Details

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

**[townhall@melksham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townhall@melksham-tc.gov.uk)**

**[clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk)**

The Town and/or Parish Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial meeting as soon as possible following contact.

### Additional Notes

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

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

# Appendix 2 Evidence Base Summary



## Neighbourhood Area Level Evidence

### Prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan

Melksham Design Guide and Code (2023 Aecom)  
Local Green Space Report (2023)  
Green Gap & Wedge Study (2023 Aecom/Iceni Projects)  
Locally Valued Heritage Assets (2023)  
Town Centre Masterplan (2023 Aecom)  
Housing Needs Assessment (2023 Aecom)  
Community Facilities Evidence Base Report (2020/Minor update 2023)  
Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report (2020/Minor Update 2023)  
Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report (2020)  
Housing Need Assessment (AECOM, 2022)  
Site Options and Assessment Report (AECOM, 2023)  
Points of the Compass Appraisal (AECOM, 2017)  
Heritage Assessment (Policy 7.3 Allocation of Lane at Whitley Farm) (John Davey, 2020)  
Town and Parish Pre-application Protocol (see Appendix 1)

### Pre-existing Reports

Melksham Town 2020-2036 (Townswork, 2019)

### Relevant Wiltshire Council (and others) Evidence

Wiltshire Council Local Plan and Evidence Base.

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/8038/Wiltshire-s-Local-Plan>

National Character Area Profile: 117 Avon Vales (NE522) (Natural England, 2014). Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4822288767647744#:~:text=This%20record%20was%20published%20by%20Natural%20England%20on%202031%20January%202014.&text=This%20is%20an%20undulating%2C%20low,and%20east%20by%20higher%20land.>

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

Severn River Basin District River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency, Updated 2015). Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/718336/Severn\\_RBD\\_Part\\_1\\_river\\_basin\\_management\\_plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718336/Severn_RBD_Part_1_river_basin_management_plan.pdf)







MELKSHAM  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN