

**MINUTES of the Planning Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on
Monday 21 December 2020 at 7.00pm**

**DUE TO THE ON-GOING COVID 19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS THIS WAS A
VIRTUAL MEETING, WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC BEING ABLE TO ACCESS
THE MEETING VIA THE PUBLISHED ZOOM INVITATION OR VIA YOUTUBE**

Present: Councillors Richard Wood (Council & Committee Chair), John Glover (Council Vice Chair), Alan Baines, (Committee Vice-Chair), David Pafford and Mary Pile

Also Present: Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (Melksham Without North) (Part of meeting)

One member of public present

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Lorraine McRandle (Parish Officer)

226/20 Welcome, Announcements & Housekeeping

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

227/20 To receive Apologies and approval of reasons given

The Clerk informed the meeting no apologies had been received.

It was noted both Councillor Coombes and Chivers were not present.

Post meeting note: Councillor Coombes was unable to access the meeting and left an answerphone message during the meeting.

228/20 Declarations of Interest

a) To receive Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

**b) To consider for approval any Dispensation Requests
received by the Clerk and not previously considered**

None.

c) To note standing Dispensations relating to planning applications

The Council have a dispensation lodged with Wiltshire Council dealing with Section 106 agreements relating to planning applications within the parish.

229/20 Planning Applications

To consider the following Planning Applications:

20/10238/FUL: 44B Westlands Lane, Beanacre. Single storey rear extension. Addition of a 4 metre bi-fold door and velux roof lights. Applicant Richard Chapple (comments by 25 December)

Comment: No objection

20/09980/FUL: Land At, Kestrel Court, Bowerhill. Increase of the existing parking area for 3 new parking spaces for residents at Kestrel Court, to include; tarmacadam finished surface, felling of the existing tree and installing a soak-away for drainage to the proposed parking area.

Comment: No objection, but ask that a new tree be planted to replace the one to be removed.

Councillor Alford and a member of the public joined the meeting at this point.

20/10358/FUL: Fern Cottage, 488 Semington Road. Demolition of existing rear single storey extension and replacement with two storey rear extension. Applicants Mr & Mrs Brooks

Comment: No objection

230/20 Public Participation

Councillor Alford and a member of the public had arrived after this item, however, the Chair invited them to speak, if they wished.

Councillor Alford stated he wished to comment on the Local Plan Review.

The Chair explained as the documentation had only been received recently the various documents would not be debated by the Council and invited Councillor Alford to speak to this item.

Councillor Alford explained preparation on the Local Plan Review had been brought forward by Wiltshire Council, due to the lack of 5 year land supply, who were consulting earlier in the process, which would hopefully give an opportunity to shape the plan.

Councillor Alford stated within the Empowering Rural Communities document, regarding market housing in rural areas, Wiltshire Council were proposing to seek 40% affordable housing on all schemes of more than 5 dwelling in rural areas and raised a concern at the potential for affordable housing not to come forward in rural areas.

Councillor Alford also raised a concern in order to make sites viable, developers might be tempted to build executive type homes to compensate for the loss in revenue from the affordable homes, at the detriment of the provision of mid-range type housing, popular with most people, and explained he would be discussing his concerns with the Spatial Planning Officer at Wiltshire Council.

A member of public stated they could not access the YouTube recording and had joined the meeting to listen to the item regarding the lack of 5 year land supply.

Councillor Alford left to join another meeting elsewhere.

231/20 Revised Plans To comment on any revised plans received within the required timeframe (14 days)

No revised plans had been received.

232/20 Planning Appeal: 20/04259/FUL - Land adjacent to 406c The Spa.

The Clerk informed the meeting the appeal had started on 30 November and in line with the Parish Council's policy, their comments had been forward to the Planning Inspector under delegated powers.

233/20 Planning Enforcement: To note any planning enforcement queries raised.

a) 213A Corsham Road, Whitley (19/08483/FUL) – Min 206/20 – Planning 30/11/20)

Following a query raised by Councillor Pile at a previous meeting, as to whether planning permission had been approved for a new dwelling, investigation had clarified planning permission had been given on 20 April 2020 and that the Council had not been able to view the plans at the time due to technical issues with Wiltshire Council's Planning system.

234/20 Update on Planning Application 20/05766: by Ashford Homes for 9 dwellings on First Lane, Whitley

To note this application has been withdrawn by the applicant.

235/20 Planning Policy

a) Lack of 5 Year Land Supply To note response from Wiltshire Council regarding lack of 5 year land supply (*if received*)

The Clerk informed the meeting, unfortunately she had not yet written to Wiltshire Council regarding concerns at the impact a lack of 5 year land supply was having on the parish.

However, a Wiltshire Council Briefing Note (20-37) had been issued providing an update on the Housing Land Supply, stating '...having completed an update on Wiltshire's housing land supply position, the current position is 4.56 years supply, which was felt to be a modest shortfall and will inform decision taking.'

Within the briefing note it also stated: 'Although a shortfall in housing land supply means the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in decision-taking, this does not mean that every housing application should be granted permission. Careful consideration will need to be given to the merits of each case and appropriate weight afforded to development plan policies when determining applications, as well as the views of the local community'.

The Clerk explained she was reassured by the last paragraph in the briefing note which stated as follows 'The views of the local

community, particularly those of town and parish councils will be important in considering potential benefits and impacts of proposals when planning applications are determined.'

Councillor Glover also welcomed this view and looked forward to Wiltshire Council liaising with the parish council on those applications coming forward.

Recommendation: In the Clerk's letter to Wiltshire Council regarding the lack of 5 year land supply and it's impact on the parish to state the parish council look forward to their implementation of consulting with the parish council on potential benefits and impacts of proposals of applications coming forward and list those currently in the pipeline.

b) Local Plan Review. To note Cabinet Decision on 1 December regarding consultation on the first draft of the Local Plan Meeting. Executive Summary/Report to Cabinet on 1 December 2020

- i) Extract from Cabinet meeting minutes held on 1 December regarding the LPR**
- ii) Emerging Spatial Strategy**
- iii) Planning for Melksham**
- iv) Melksham Pool of Potential Development Sites**
- v) Empowering Rural Communities**

Consultation on the Local Plan Review will take place from 13 January until 9 March.

The Chair recommended as the papers had only just been made available, to defer discussing the reports until a future meeting to allow further scrutiny of the various reports.

Councillors commented on the various sites included within the Melksham Pool of Potential Sites document and noted Wiltshire Council were seeking the views of the Town and Parish Council on the various sites for possible further assessment for inclusion in the Local Plan.

Councillors Baines stated it would be useful when considering the sites if information regarding the quality of land could be made available. The Clerk explained she understood this information was included in the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA report), which could be made available when discussing the various sites.

Councillor Glover raised concern at the accuracy of some of the information provided within the appendices, particularly where reference was made to earlier consultation with town and parish councils. It was also noted reference was made to particular documents within the various reports, but these documents were not detailed in the footnotes and hoped this information would be provided.

It was also noted there appeared to be conflicting information regarding the adequate supply of employment land within Melksham, with Councillors agreeing more employment land was required in Melksham.

The Clerk explained at a recent Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting it had been agreed to write to Wiltshire Council on how both councils, Wiltshire Council and the Neighbourhood Plan could work more collaboratively regarding future growth of Melksham and to start discussions on a Statement of Common Ground with Wiltshire Council as agreed earlier in the year. The Neighbourhood Plan consultants, following the issuing of the Local Plan reports, felt it important to hold these discussions and contacted the Spatial Planning Officer at Wiltshire Council who agreed to attend the Neighbourhood Plan meeting in January to discuss this.

The Clerk explained Wiltshire Council were holding several meetings on the Local Plan Review, with one for Melksham being held on 28 January from 7-8pm, with two meetings for rural planning in February and had signed up for the meeting on 28 January and the rural planning meeting on 2 February and encouraged other members of the Planning Committee to do the same.

The Clerk had noted within the Empowering Rural Communities document Wiltshire Council were looking to allocate 95 dwellings in Shaw.

The Clerk raised concern that as the parish council area would be taking the bulk of the housing for the Melksham area, that the parish council should be given more time than other smaller parish councils. The Neighbourhood Planning consultants had also suggested a meeting with members of both councils, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Wiltshire Council to discuss the direction of growth for Melksham. The Chair agreed and asked that the Clerk push for this meeting.

Councillor Glover asked if the parish council would be liaising with the Town Council on a joint response to the Local Plan Review.

It was felt as the Town and Parish Council had different needs, both councils would be making different responses, therefore it was felt not appropriate to undertake a joint approach on the Local Plan Review.

Recommendation: The various reports be included on the Planning meeting agenda for 18 January and to place a standing item on the Planning agenda during the consultation period to enable debate on the various documents and for Members to sign up for the various Local Plan Review meetings.

c) Neighbourhood Plan

i) To note minutes of recent Steering Group meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 August, 23 September, 21 October and 27 November had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. The Clerk apologised for the delay in circulating the minutes.

Recommendation: To place these on the Planning agenda for 18 January for noting.

ii) To consider correspondence (*if received*) from Wiltshire Council following queries raised by the NHP Steering Group about the interaction of the NHP Version 2, the Local Plan Review and Statement of Common Ground

The Clerk explained she had contacted David Way, Spatial Planning Officer regarding a meeting on the above but unfortunately he was on leave until 4 January and would contact him again in the new year.

236/20

S106 Agreements and Developer meetings: (*Standing Item*)

a) To note update on ongoing and new S106 Agreements

- i) Public Art Update. To consider proposal of Wiltshire Council for Parish Council to run outstanding public art contracts direct, with funding to be transferred and legal agreements put in place.**

The Clerk explained she had been in touch with Wiltshire Council regarding outstanding public art contracts following the retirement of Meril Morgan, Public Art officer who had not been replaced.

Bowood View: Wiltshire Council would be contacting Bellway to release the £45,000 art funding as it was understood they had met their trigger of 76 houses occupied. They would then employ Diana Hatton, Art Consultant to oversee the art project on the village hall and the artist, Kerry Lemon, who would be starting soon in order to inform the village hall tender.

Sandridge Place: Wiltshire Council have given permission to the Parish Council to chase this one up and contact the artist.

Pathfinder Way: The Clerk stated when she had contacted Taylor Wimpey to inform them the Parish Council were happy to include the art installation under their public liability insurance, but queried who would insure it from accidental or deliberate damage. Taylor Wimpey had indicated they would prefer if the Parish Council insured it and upon enquiring with Wiltshire Council whether this was usual, was informed Wiltshire Council would not be able to insure it, therefore, it was up to the Parish Council whether they would or whether the development management company would be prepared to take it. Therefore, the Clerk sought a steer from Members.

The Clerk explained following the recent site visit had noted the public art would not be as visible as originally thought, due to trees and noted an alternative location could be where the current site advertising signage is located on Pathfinder Way.

Recommendation: To ask Taylor Wimpey for their Management Company to insure and maintain the public art and information board on the site and whether the public art “gate” panels could be located in a more visible location, such as where the advertising boards are currently located, once they have been removed.

ii) Public Open Space Re: Pathfinder Place

Following the recent site visit, the Clerk explained whilst everything was in place as requested, it was noted one of the gates for the play area opened out onto a footpath, adjacent to the attenuation pond and it was felt some form of safety barrier needed to be erected to stop children running out of the park and straight into the attenuation pond.

The Clerk explained she had spoken to Colin Brown, Recreational Officer, Wiltshire Council who advised speaking to the Planning Officer. The Planning Officer had stated, Wiltshire Council would prefer not to have fences around attenuation ponds for aesthetic reasons, however, if the Council wished one to be erected, provided a suggestion of a suitable solution, therefore the Clerk asked if Members wished her to go back to Taylor Wimpey and ask that they provide for a suitable barrier.

Discussion ensued on a suitable barrier.

The Clerk explained whilst on the site visit had looked at the public open space area where the information boards and parish noticeboards were due to be erected and noted there was a flowerbed around it, when it had been assumed this would be a footpath, which would make accessing these difficult and sought a steer from Members how they wished to proceed.

The Clerk explained she had spoken to the Section 106 Officer at Wiltshire Council regarding the transfer of the play and they had clarified a Practical Completion Certificate needed to be completed before it would be handed over. The Clerk clarified she would contact the Council's insurers to clarify that whilst the Council had gone ahead and insured the play area, Wiltshire Council were awaiting the completed Practical Completion Certificate, but would let them know when the hand-over had taken place.

Recommendation: To ask Taylor Wimpey to erect a suitable barrier opposite the play area gate adjacent to the attenuation pond. As it appears there is a flower bed around the public open space, when it was assumed there would be a footpath, to also ask if the Parish Council noticeboard and

information boards could be erected within the flowerbed facing out.

b) To consider any new S106 queries

There were no new s106 queries.

c) To note any S106 decisions made under delegated powers

None.

d) To note any contact with developers

i) To note notes of meeting with Savills held on 9 December regarding proposals to develop Whitley Farm and consider their requests

In line with the Council's Pre App Policy the notes of the meeting held on 9 December with representatives of Savills regarding proposals for the Whitley Farm site were presented to the Planning Committee.

Those who attended the meeting included from the Parish Council: Councillors Wood, Baines, Pafford, Pile; Teresa Strange, Clerk and Lorraine McRandle, Parish Officer; Geraint Jones, Planning Director and Victoria Button, Senior Planner from Savills.

Vicky explained Savills have been working with Neston Park Estates who own Whitley Farm for four years on proposals for the site, which is currently used for agricultural purposes and comprises several agricultural buildings, such as the Grade II Listed Tithe Barn, a farmhouse, silage tank and a number of modern agricultural barns. The site has no environmental designations and is in a Flood Zone 1 area, however, they are aware of flooding issues elsewhere in Whitley, particularly in the north.

Discussions had taken place with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group regarding the residential redevelopment of this site, including potential community gain, such as flood mitigation for Whitley on other land owned by Neston Estates, a play area and additional parking for the Toast Office with the Steering Group being supportive of these proposals and it was hoped

this site would have come forward via the Neighbourhood Plan process, following these discussions.

As the plan progressed, Place Studios (consultants for the Neighbourhood Plan) in early 2020 felt the heritage issues associated with the listed buildings were too significant to resolve during the Neighbourhood Plan timescales, therefore the site had been excluded in the Reg 14 version of the plan and another site (Middle Farm, Whitley), put forward.

Vicky explained as part of Savills response to the Reg 14 consultation in July, a site-specific regeneration/redevelopment policy for the site had been proposed. Wiltshire Council had supported similar policies in other plans, such as Holt for the Tannery Site. Having such a policy would provide a hook to secure the principle of development but allows actual details and proposals for development to come through the application route.

The NHP Regulation 16 consultation has started, and from that they can see that the Steering Group have excluded the policy proposed at Reg 14, as Middle Farm is capable of delivering the number of houses required for Melksham and there was no need for this policy in the draft plan.

Vicky went through the previous plans to create 21 dwellings by converting the Tithe Barn into three dwellings and creating 18 dwellings by demolishing the modern agricultural buildings and converting the traditional single storey agricultural buildings on the North side and explained the new plans hopefully addressed the heritage concerns, with these plans developed using principles in Historic England's Farmstead Assessment.

The new plans, which were indicative and lower density than previously proposed, would evolve through the application and if progressed through the Neighbourhood Plan, included developing the Tithe Barn into 3 dwellings and the development of a further 18 dwellings, using a farmyard ad hoc approach to replicate how the site used to be, achieved using historic mapping, restricting the extent of the build form not beyond what already there, which will be sensitive in design, given concerns raised previously.

Geraint explained the layout of the original plans were felt to be reminiscent of a modern housing estate layout by Wiltshire

Council, whereas the new proposals provided a more farmyard layout.

Current Position

Vicky explained whilst Wiltshire Council have provided a written response to the pre application proposals for the site, a meeting will not take place until January, it was hoped this meeting would help with feeding a response to the Regulation 16 consultation.

In the written response, Wiltshire Council indicated they were not supportive of proposals for the site, as the development is outside the Settlement boundary as in Core Policies 1 & 2 of the Core Strategy therefore, proposals for the site, will only been accepted if they come via the Neighbourhood Plan.

Community Benefits

Vicky explained as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, a number of community benefits had been proposed, such as flood mitigation, play equipment, additional parking for outside the Toast Office. However, outside the Neighbourhood Plan process these are not things that can be secured through Section 106 Agreements and can only be brought forward through site allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The site is only in Flood Zone 1 and therefore through a planning application, would only have to provide mitigation for the site itself.

Geraint hoped there was still opportunity for further representations at this stage regarding inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan and felt the state of the site was not conducive to its location. Neston Estate were in difficult position, as there was a danger they could spend money to develop plans for the site that would not come to fruition, unless via the Neighbourhood Plan route. Therefore, Geraint sought the Parish Council's view on how they wished to move forward on this site.

Councillor Wood explained initially the Parish Council were supportive of the site being included in the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly as it would have provided flood mitigation for Whitley, however, more than 10 dwellings were needed on the site to make it viable in respect of community gain, such as flood mitigation and to qualify for an element of affordable

housing and were thrown off course when Wiltshire Council at most would only support 8 dwellings on the site in order to protect the heritage of the site following heritage assessment and therefore did not meet the criteria set by the Steering Group to be considered for inclusion in the plan. However, liked idea of sympathetic farmyard development, more than previous plans, however, more dwellings were being suggested than previously and raised a concern how this would sit with Wiltshire Council.

Geraint welcomed the support for a farmyard type development and explained Savills were surprised at the 8-dwelling limit proposed by Heritage at Wiltshire Council, however, Savills heritage consultants did not share this view and whilst current plans show proposals for 21 dwellings, this did not mean this will be the number built and would need discussions with heritage people from both sides to move forward on proposals for the site.

Geraint expressed frustration the heritage response was issued in early 2020 and there still had not been an opportunity to discuss proposals with Wiltshire Council and consider a way forward and felt the policy proposed was part of the way forward.

Councillor Wood explained as the plan had progressed to Regulation 16 it would be difficult to include the site now.

Councillor Baines explained it had been accepted this site was suitable for a small amount of development and was brownfield land.

The Clerk clarified whilst the Conversation Officer at Wiltshire Council had stated 8 dwellings would be more appropriate for this site, the officer at Historic England and the heritage consultant employed by Place Studio had also recommended under 10 dwellings for this site.

Regarding the site being classed as 'Brownfield', the Clerk clarified whilst it might be a previously developed site, in planning terms it is not classed as such, being of agricultural use.

Geraint explained unless there was a way to say in principle that some form of development, replacing existing buildings is acceptable, effectively this site cannot move forward at this

stage, until there is a Plan review and will remain stagnant until then.

Councillor Pile felt something needed to be done to the site, given the condition of the site and sought clarification on how the 8 dwellings would be achieved and whether this included the conversation of the barn.

Geraint clarified the 8 dwellings would be 5 new, plus conversation of the barn to 3 dwellings. However, the 21 proposed would be a significant reduction in buildings which currently occupy the site and understood Wiltshire Council had no issue with conversation of the barn, but how other proposals for the site relate to the barn, given its listed status and heritage importance and felt a scheme could be delivered which was sensitive to existing buildings, including the listed barn, but needed to explore this with the Heritage Officer at Wiltshire Council.

Councillor Pafford whilst welcoming limited development of the site, raised a concern at how this fitted in with other proposed schemes in the area and the number of overall dwellings proposed for the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Councillor Wood drew both Geraint and Vicky's attention to a similar scheme at Woolmore Farm, which had proposals to sensitively convert former agricultural buildings into dwellings and were similar in spirit to what proposing for this site and sought clarification from the Clerk on a way forward, with the Clerk explaining Savills could respond via the Reg 16 consultation.

The Clerk explained the Steering Group had agreed to review the Neighbourhood Plan immediately, in line with the Local Plan Review. Both Councils would be having discussions with Wiltshire Council to enable a joined-up approach for housing allocations for the plan area.

Geraint welcomed the fact the Neighbourhood Plan was being reviewed, which gave an opportunity to be considered in the second Neighbourhood Plan and time for proposals for the site to evolve and asked if everyone had had an opportunity to look at all the heritage responses.

The Clerk clarified the Neighbourhood Plan group had looked at them and had hoped to collate the various responses for the

meeting, but had not been able to. Geraint explained he was happy to collate these and share with the group and welcomed feedback on the issues raised.

Geraint explained his disappointment at not being able to hold conversations with Wiltshire Council and asked if the Parish Council were prepared to assist with encouraging a meeting between Wiltshire Council and Place Consultants to move things forward, offering to pay towards the costs of consultants attending the meeting.

Councillor Baines explained the reason for the late change was the site selection process, looked at all proposals on basis what community benefit would come forward from each site and when 8 dwellings suggested for this site had meant that community benefit would not be feasible, therefore did not meet original proposal of community benefit when considering sites.

Geraint explained the need to convince heritage officers there was a way of developing the site with more than 8, but less than 20, which would generate the community benefit and meet the original criteria of site selection in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Clerk clarified another reason the site was not included was originally when a call for sites was made, any under 10 were eliminated as they did not provide additional benefits. The Steering Group had made a decision the previous year to submit the plan in April this year, having decided to move the plan along quickly, however, Covid hit in March which had slowed down the process and hence why the plan had gone to Reg 14 in the Summer and had only recently been submitted for Reg 16. In wishing to move the plan along quickly, the Steering Group had looked at what was achievable to be included in the plan in the short timeframe and what could be deferred until the plan review.

Geraint expressed disappointment at not being able to move forward with plans for this site, whether in the current plan or in the next one, unless discussion were held with the Neighbourhood Plan consultants, their heritage consultants, their own heritage consultants and Wiltshire Council and reiterated the offer to cover any consultant costs incurred.

Geraint also asked if the Parish Council could help in encouraging Wiltshire Council to engage, particularly as there is a keenness to see this site redeveloped and to make them

aware Savills accept principle for the site needs a policy, to move it forward, potentially in the revised Neighbourhood Plan. Without knowing the number of dwellings which will be acceptable to Wiltshire Council following these discussions consideration cannot be given to potential community gain for the site.

The Clerk explained the notes from this meeting would be presented to the next Planning Committee meeting, being held on 21 December, however, some of the questions being asked were outside the delegated powers of the Planning Committee, therefore any recommendations would have to be approved at Full Council, with the next meeting being held on 25 January, both meetings were open to the public, which Savills were welcome to attend.

The Clerk clarified who Savills had been holding conversations with at Wiltshire Council.

It was clarified whilst originally conversations were held with David Way for the NHP, currently conversations were being held with Steven Sims as a Planning Officer for the pre-app.

Vicky explained Wiltshire Council's Heritage assessment, mentioned 30 dwellings and had been concerned this was what they were making their assessment on and had been hoping to clarify this at the meeting which was due to be held in March, but had been cancelled. Having since spoken to Vaughan from Place Studio it was clarified 30 dwellings was mentioned in the Aecom Site Assessment Report.

Councillor Wood sought the view of Councillor Pile, as a ward Member of Shaw, Whitley & Beanacre

Councillor Pile stated she felt residents of Whitley would like to see the site redeveloped but to bear in mind the size of the village and the impact on roads, particularly First Lane, which is quite narrow in places and the lack of amenities for any new residents.

Geraint explained Savills were looking at parking issues on Top Lane and how these could be alleviated. Councillor Wood explained the Toast Office had closed in March prior to lockdown, with Councillor Pile clarifying it appeared the Toast Office was currently being marketed as a business/residential use.

Geraint agreed to send a brief on proposals for the site to assist conversations at forthcoming meetings.

The Clerk explained she had sought advice from the Neighbourhood Plan consultants following the meeting.

The consultants had advised they would be happy to give a response to questions raised by Savills at the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting in January for their consideration.

Members agreed this was a suitable way forward.

ii) To note notes of meeting held on 9 December with Gary Cooke regarding proposals for large leisure facility at Bowerhill.

In line with the Council's Pre App Policy the notes of the meeting held on 9 December with Gary Cooke, Boomerang regarding proposals for a large leisure facility at Bowerhill were presented to the Planning Committee.

Those who attended the meeting included from the Parish Council: Councillors Wood, Baines, Carter, Glover and Pafford, Teresa Strange, Clerk and Lorraine McRandle, Parish Officer from the Town Council: Councillor Westbrook and David McKnight, Economic Development Manager; Wiltshire Nick Holder, Melksham Without South was also in attendance, along with Gary Cooke, Managing Director, Boomerang, Helen Stapleton, Boomerang and Fabien Coupat, Director DK Architects.

Gary explained Wiltshire Council were currently inviting bids for the Christie Miller Complex and the golf course to the rear and was currently putting a bid together, which needed to be submitted to Wiltshire Council by 22 December.

Several businesses were currently looking to expand including himself, therefore Christie Miller was an ideal site for all of these, such as Future of Football; Crossfit, Andrew Tombling, Tae Kwando; wishing to have a regional centre. Gary also proposed to include a bowling centre on the site, as well as a large leisure park, with these proposals being stage one of a two stage plan of development in Bowerhill.

The second stage of his plans included land to the North of Bowerhill Industrial estate, with outline plans for 240 dwellings and a care home having recently been submitted for this site. Gary explained he currently rented an acre of this site and had done for 10 years and felt housing was not an appropriate use for the site, being more suited to employment use and the expansion of the Bowerhill industrial estate.

Councillor Glover sought clarification on the main access for the larger site proposed.

Gary explained the main access would be via the existing household recycling centre access with proposals for another access on land to the North of the site. There was also a potential third access via land currently occupied by Boomerang.

Fabien explained he had only recently joined the team, with the plans having been drawn-up by someone else and explained feedback from Highways was to make the access along the right-hand side of the current Christie Miller building wider to provide access to the rear to what is currently the disused golf course.

It was noted there were proposals for parking on land to the rear of the current golf course, which did not form part of the bid site. Gary explained the parking would be 'grassed' with bays provided, rather than concrete.

Fabien also clarified bids were currently invited on the Christie Miller and golf course sites, with the other land around it currently not available and in the ownership of other landowners.

As proposals for the site included re-positioning the recycling centre, clarification was sought by the Clerk if all bidders had to look at relocating the recycling centre.

Gary clarified it was up to each bidder to look at relocating the recycling centre within the current footprint, however, if they could not, they would have to find an alternative site elsewhere at their expense.

Councillor Glover expressed concern if the large proposals were to go forward at the difficulty's users may have in accessing the

site due to the number of large container lorries/vehicles which park on the side of the road.

Gary explained he was aware of the current issues and hoped if the plans were to go ahead hoped something could be looked at to alleviate the problem.

Councillor Wood suggested given the level of parking proposed, this could provide parking for the rest of Bowerhill industrial estate, therefore alleviating problems of vehicles parking on the side of the road. Gary agreed parking could be available for other businesses to use given the number of parking spaces proposed in the larger scheme.

Gary explained proposals for Phase 2 of his plans to the North of Bowerhill Industrial Estate (which currently had outline plans for 240 houses), as well as land to the rear of the current golf course included:

- Bingo & Golf Centre
- Night Club
- Dance & Fitness Club
- Cinema
- Restaurants
- Water Park
- Skate Park
- Boomerang Outdoor Centre
- Leisure Training Facility
- Climbing Centre
- Retail and Apartments (Envisaged selling leases for the apartments, to control occupants of the site)

Councillor Baines welcomed the proposals, particularly those to the North of Bowerhill Industrial Estate which were more in-line with what the Parish Council envisaged and was a better use of the site than housing as currently proposed. Whilst welcoming proposals for an access off of the A365 raised a concern at the erosion of the buffer zone between Melksham and Bowerhill, especially given the buffer has already been eroded due to proposals for housing on adjacent land.

The Clerk explained regarding the need to protect the 'rural buffer zone', within the Core Strategy it stated the following:

'Melksham and Bowerhill village have a functional relationship. They are considered together for the Core Strategy. The identities of these separate communities will need to be preserved through the planning process'.

Regarding expansion of employment within Melksham, the Core Strategy stated:

'Further employment growth in Melksham will help to diversify the employment base. Providing protection against change in the employment market. The regeneration of existing employment sites like Bowerhill remain a priority.'

Councillor Carter welcomed the proposals and felt due to the impact of Covid this would get the economy going in Melksham and felt the Parish Council should support the proposals.

Councillor Westbrook also reiterated how brilliant the plans were for Melksham and supported the proposals but did raise concern at the erosion of the buffer, but felt this issue could be overcome as plans progressed.

Councillor Holder explained he had been in touch with Gary previously on the proposals and spoken to other members of the Area Board who were broadly supportive of the proposals. Regarding proposals for housing on this site, the application for 240 houses had been 'Called in', however, it was unclear when this application would be considered at a Planning Committee.

Councillor Holder sought clarification on what the net increase in employment would be if the proposals were to go ahead.

Gary explained plans for the Christie Miller site would require 250 staff (between Boomerang and Future of Football), with proposals for the North of the site generating another 500 jobs (possibly between 750-1000 jobs could be created).

Councillor Pafford welcomed the plans and hoped the larger development would be able to go ahead but raised concern at the scale, achievability and extent of duplication with proposals for the Campus.

Gary agreed it was a massive undertaking and would take some time to achieve, possibly 10 years. Finance for Phase 1 was

already available through various means and anticipated as the project progressed being able to contribute £1/4M -£1/2M a year to the project. Some elements of costs were unknown regarding Phase 2, such as costs to purchase additional land. However, there was a lot of support for proposals and felt further investment would be forthcoming if needed.

With regards to the numbers of people using the facilities proposed, it was hoped to attract people not just from Melksham but further afield.

Regarding the timeline, if successful with the bid, it would take at least 12 months to start the project which would allow time to further develop the plans.

Councillor Wood asked if proposed for the 240 houses and care home were approved would this stop plans for this part of the site.

Gary explained whilst development on the Christie Miller site and golf course would be able to go ahead, proposals for Phase 2 on the site to the North could potentially be relocated to land to the rear of the golf course, but this would reduce the level of car parking currently proposed.

David McKnight asked if the parking proposed was enough to sustain the development on the Christie Miller site.

Gary explained plans were not scaled drawings, therefore the level of parking was indicative and envisaged as the buildings for the Christie Miller site would be for different activities, would generate traffic at different times of the day and spread the level of use and create less pressure on parking.

Fabien asked if there was a level of support for the plans.

The Clerk explained the Planning Committee were due to meet on 21 December with recommendations from that meeting not being ratified until the Full Council meeting in January, which was too late, if a bid had to be submitted by 22 December. However, whilst the agenda for the Full Council meeting on 14 December had been published, there was still time to issue a revised agenda, if Members felt this was appropriate.

Members agreed an item regarding proposals for the Christie Miller site should go on the agenda for consideration on 14 December.

The Clerk clarified if Gary was happy for this information to be discussed in the public domain. Gary explained he had no issue with this.

Regarding Melksham Town Council considering the proposals, Councillor Westbrook explained there was a potential for a Special Town Council meeting the following week and was happy to talk to the Clerk to ask if this could be placed on the agenda to enable a response from the Town Council on proposals.

Councillor Glover stated whilst supporting the proposals noted other people would also be bidding for the site, therefore there was a possibility the Parish Council could be approached by other developers seeking pre app discussion, but felt the Parish Council could support proposals in advance of anything else which may come forward.

The Clerk indicated that via the Neighbourhood Plan process they were aware of others who were interested in the site, this information was freely available on the Neighbourhood Plan website, if Gary wished to investigate.

Meeting finished at 7.58pm

Signed by the Chair.....
Full Council, 25 January 2020