

## **APPENDIX TWO:**

NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON **WEDNESDAY 21 JULY 2021 AT BOWERHILL VILLAGE HALL** BY MELKSHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL TO HEAR VIEWS OF PARISH RESIDENTS ON THE PROPOSED BYPASS CONSULTATION (2<sup>ND</sup> NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON ROUTE 10C) TO INFORM THE PARISH COUNCIL WHEN FORMING THEIR OWN RESPONSE

Present:

### Melksham Without Parish Council

Councillor John Glover	Chair of Council and Chair of meeting
Councillor Alan Baines	Chair of Highway & Streetscene Committee
Councillor David Pafford	Vice Chair of Council
Councillor Mark Harris	
Councillor John Doel	
Councillor Robert Shea Simmonds	
Councillor Rob Hoyle	

Teresa Strange	Clerk
Lorraine McRandle	Parish Officer

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder  
Peter Dunford, Community Engagement Manager (Melksham Community Area)

46 Members of the public present.

Councillor John Glover opened the meeting and explained the meeting was not planned to be a discussion type event, but for the councillors to listen to the views of parishioners to aid the forming of the parish council's own response to the Wiltshire Council consultation.

The parish council area surrounds the town and represents communities that will most likely have opposing views on the potential bypass, such as those in Beanacre and Bowerhill, and the parish council will be making their response to the consultation following input from all the differing views of their parishioners.

It was reiterated by the Chairman and other councillors during the meeting that residents must send their views to Wiltshire Council direct, that can be done either by the online survey, by email or writing to the officers at County Hall.<sup>1</sup> In addition, to note that this is the time to ask for any mitigation to alleviate concerns raised, in case Wiltshire Council are minded to proceed with the project. So, if objecting – or supporting – do state that if it goes ahead, what mitigation would be required to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/3146/A350-Melksham-bypass>

overcome a problem area (for example to ameliorate noise) and to suggest what that mitigation could be perhaps a cutting, trees; as well as suggested improvements to Rights of Way etc.

The message that the proposed bypass is not just a “Melksham” or “Beanacre” bypass was also emphasised; and not just a project of Wiltshire Council but a part of a Strategic Route by the Western Gateway comprising of several local authorities including Gloucester, Wiltshire, Christchurch, Poole, Dorset and BANES.<sup>2</sup> The Western Gateway is a group of combined authorities working together to obtain the funding for the project which is classed as a “Major Road Network”. It would be funded in the main by central Government, with some element from Wiltshire Council. There are currently arguments being put forward by some that it is not affordable, and Wiltshire Council had published documents stating that it is affordable; a dichotomy of views.

Councillor Glover stated there had been comments the project was to enable housing, however this was not the case, housing would happen whether the bypass went ahead or not.

As Melksham has a Neighbourhood Plan this provides 2 years protection against speculative development in inappropriate locations by developers if there is a lack of 5-year land supply. Wiltshire Council have to maintain a 5-year land supply for development, if they do not this means developers are more than likely to get planning permission for developments in locations they otherwise would not. Wiltshire Council have been given by the Government a housing figure of 44,000 to achieve by 2036.

Councillor Glover also explained in planning law<sup>3</sup> the presumption was always in favour of development and unless there are any real material grounds to turn down an application it would be approved. However, having the Neighbourhood Plan at least provided some form of say where development should take place.

During the evening Councillor Holder explained with regard to mitigation to make the scheme acceptable, if this was too costly the by-pass may not go ahead.

Councillor Pafford explained the Parish Council did not have to consult with residents on this second consultation. However, the Council felt it was important to get the views of its residents before responding the consultation, as without doing so the Parish Council would have probably submitted a weaker response.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/about/>

<sup>3</sup>National Planning Policy Framework

**Questions and Comments** (several questions were asked which the Parish Council could not answer, as this was not their project and therefore directed people to the Major Highways Project Team at Wiltshire Council to get answers several times during the meeting) (Some post meeting notes have been provided to answer questions, if there was no opportunity to answer at the meeting):

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>ANSWER</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there an opportunity for the route to be changed/modified at this stage?</li> </ul>	<p>Now is the time to get some tweaks to the route, but the 10c North to South is the accepted route. Once it gets to the statutory consultation stage it will be too late.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oppose the by-pass and want to stop it. How do we do this?</li> </ul>	<p>The Parish Council do not have funds to organise a Stop the Bypass Campaign. People will have to organise themselves, pool together with others with similar views.</p> <p>Graham Ellis explained the A350 Alliance helped with the Westbury Bypass application some years ago and maybe they could help.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not want to ask for mitigation as this would indicate to Wiltshire Council we approve.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a more cost-effective route is found would this be taken forward?</li> </ul>	<p>A business case is being put together to look at cost against benefit.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are benefits to building it? What are the financial benefits?</li> </ul>	<p>The link will provide better connectivity from the North to Poole.</p> <p>Various Reports are available on Wiltshire Council's website.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No agricultural assessment has been undertaken. Project goes</li> </ul>	

<p>against Government commitment to farmers and local food production and food security.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has reasoning for an improved route to Poole from North changed now we are out of the EU?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there enough funding for the project, understand Wiltshire Council ring fenced money already for this project?</li> </ul>	<p>Funding available at present for an outline business case for the scheme.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>The scheme will be competing with other major highway projects in the Country for funding to build the scheme. There may be opportunities to apply for funding from elsewhere.</p> <p>Wiltshire Council has not ring-fenced money.</p> <p>Boris Johnson announced early last year that some major highway project funding had been ring fenced, which included improvements to the A350 around Melksham.<sup>4</sup></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will there be a public enquiry and at what stage? How do you trigger a Public Enquiry?</li> </ul>	<p>Wiltshire Councillor Holder explained his personal opinion was the business case might not be proven due to the amount of mitigation which may be required. There are various stages the project still has to go through before it will be built and a public enquiry was put in as one stage, when it will happen not sure. Everyone will have to take personally responsibility to put their views to Wiltshire Council.</p>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/150m-to-be-invested-in-two-major-road-improvement-schemes-in-Wiltshire>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-confirms-hs2-will-go-ahead-alongside-revolution-in-local-transport>

	Suggested contacting the Major Highway Projects Team to ask when a Public Enquiry would be held (this was mentioned as part of the recent Area Board presentation) <sup>5</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would an Impact Assessment on the Environment be undertaken?</li> </ul>	This would form part a future planning application if funding granted for the scheme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of people are unaware a bypass has been proposed and that this meeting was even taken place.</li> </ul>	<p>Several updates on the A350 project have taken place, including one at the Assembly Hall last year. Two webinar events have taken place recently also. There have also been articles in Melksham News, other local newspapers and on the local ITV news.</p> <p>With regard to this public meeting, it was advertised widely on social media, the Parish Council’s website, noticeboards and via Melksham News which is delivered to over 13,500 residences and businesses. Community Groups were also contacted to ask they advertise the meetings on their social media platforms and mailing lists.</p> <p>Residents were also contacted if in an area that the Parish Council know does not receive the Melksham News.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just moving problem from one part of town to the other, how is this fair as residents in Beanacre knew there was a major road outside their properties when they bought them.</li> </ul>	

<sup>5</sup> <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=166&MId=13988&Ver=4>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear town will die if bypass implemented as businesses will disappear particularly those who rely on passing trade along the A350 such as Asda, Leekes, Subway</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts of A350 are already designed for dualling, why are they not being used?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact on the environment. Would destroy the valley.</li> </ul>	<p>An Environment Impact Study will be undertaken as part of the planning application.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has consideration be given to the need for a bypass. Since Covid the world has changed and people are using their vehicles less. Transport services also reducing. Will the statistics be reviewed in light of Covid?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on the planet. Too late once the bypass is built. People should be encouraged to use their vehicles less.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will happen to the canal? Access to the canal.</li> </ul>	<p>A bridge is proposed over the by-pass to the canal. It could be that as part of mitigation a 'green bridge' is asked for which provides the effect of walking in the open countryside, whilst crossing the road</p> <p>The bridge will have low ramps either side for easy access.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on Public Rights of Way particularly to the canal.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> Public Rights of way will be diverted. There will be one access to the canal/Giles Wood from Bowerhill.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on wildlife in the area. Kingfishers have been spotted near the canal and are sensitive to noise, if the road is built near the canal they will probably disappear elsewhere.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on community.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to Giles Wood which is used regularly particularly by Bowerhill Scouts.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> Public Rights of Way will be diverted and there will be one access via a bridge to Giles Wood and the canal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highway safety. Concern at having to cross a road to get to the canal, particularly children.</li> </ul>	<p>A bridge will be provided over the canal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Footfall survey information out of date. Undertaken in January during Covid. This does not give a true representation of how well used the footpath from Bowerhill to the canal is. Will information be updated post Covid?</li> </ul>	<p>This is a question to raise with Wiltshire Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic survey undertaken pre-covid. Will an updated report be done?</li> </ul>	<p>This is a question to raise with Wiltshire Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Integrated Transport System was talked about even in 2016. Maybe now the bypass is not required.</li> </ul>	<p>The Parish Council responded to this and supported the Bristol/Bath South Coast route taken it across the A46 to the A36 and would have taken away a lot of traffic onto a revamped A46; this was a missed opportunity</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many trees will need to be planted to mitigate against the impact of the by-pass.</li> </ul>	<p>Advice to contact WC for a response.</p>

	<p>Earlier in the meeting Cllr Glover suggested the planting of a 'wooded' area between Bowerhill and the by-pass in order to provide mitigation against noise.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on the ecology of the area, which cannot be replaced once removed. A proper ecology survey needs to be undertaken.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> An ecology report will be undertaken as part of a planning application.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route goes near to Melksham Oak School and concerns of the impact pollution will have on children's health.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern at loss of house value due to proximity of bypass.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on the local infrastructure. It cannot cope with more houses.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand bulge in design is to accommodate a football stadium.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> There is evidence of an ancient settlement at this location and therefore the route is designed to avoid it. However further investigations need to take place and it could this section of the route could be tweaked.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand 1000s houses are to be built between Melksham and Sandridge where will the water dispersed from this development go. The water table is already high. Avon Valley floods already, cannot mitigate against this forever.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> Melksham has met its' housing requirement up to 2026. Most planning applications in the pipeline have received planning permission (during a period of a lack of 5-year land supply) or been withdrawn. One has been turned down recently, which quoted the Neighbourhood Plan as a reason for refusal. There is one large application for 240 houses in Bowerhill (South of Western Way) and a 70-bed care home</p>



	<p>awaiting a decision from Wiltshire Council. Another application has just been submitted to Wiltshire Council for 150 dwellings North of Dunch Lane by a developer, which both the Parish Council and the Town Council will be commenting on shortly.</p> <p>The Local Plan Review to 2036 will be looking at a housing allocation in Melksham.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Transport Study by the Chamber of Commerce stated that only 7.14% of respondents said it was difficult to move in the area. 26.19% said suppliers and employees travel around with ease. Therefore there is no need for a bypass.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Doel a resident and farmer of Lower Woodrow explained Woodrow was very dangerous, with lots of traffic using it. His property would also be extremely close to the proposed bypass. He was asked if he had been approached regarding his land.</li> </ul> <p>Would like to see road turned into cycle track when bypassed.</p>	<p>Cllr Doel explained as a landowner he had yet to be approached and the bypass passed his property.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of evidence this is the right option.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goes against Government proposals to be net zero carbon by 2050.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact pollution would have.</li> </ul>	<p>Vehicles should not be burning fuel by time the time bypass is built due to</p>

	move to more cleaner types of fuel and electric vehicles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of engagement with farmers and landowners, particularly as this would impact their livelihoods if compulsory purchased (especially as they usually do not get market value).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journey time saving benefit? It suggests 3-4 minutes would be saved is this worth it?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> It relates to longer journeys, not local journeys and is the accumulative effective. More related to commercial traffic than local journeys.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on wellbeing and psychological wellbeing. Concern at the sociological impact.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The feeling of being cut off from villages if bypass built and the impact this will have.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resident of Lower Woodrow who recently brought their property found no mention of proposed by-pass in legal searches. When will the proposed route appear on land searches?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was asked how to encourage people to respond to the survey and what precluded them from responding?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents expressed that they did not wish to ask for mitigation, that they just wanted to stop the bypass completely.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents questioned what bearing the views of other parts of the parish had on the bypass as not affected</li> </ul>	

(eg Shaw & Whitley) and if it was if it was weighted due to population	
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It was asked if the notes from the meeting could be circulated. It was agreed the notes would be available on the Parish Council's website in due course.

The parish council were meeting on Monday evening (26<sup>th</sup> July) at the Full Council meeting to consider their response. This was a public meeting, like all council meetings, but due to the covid restrictions and therefore room capacity members of the public were encouraged to attend via Zoom. Details and the zoom link are on the agenda on the parish council website.

Councillor Robert Shea-Simonds asked where did the Council go from here to respond to the Wiltshire Council consultation and asked for a show of hands to the question "Stop the Bypass" or "Mitigation Route" to which a majority of people in the room responded positively to "Stop the Bypass".

Wiltshire Councillor Holder informed that there would be regular updates and a public consultation event at Melksham Area Board meetings.

The parish council had pulled together links to useful information on the bypass consultation, recordings of meetings etc on their website here <http://www.melkshamwithout.co.uk/index.asp?page=news&id=522>