

**MINUTES of the Planning Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council
held on Monday 17 April 2023 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices
(First Floor), Melksham Community Campus, Market Place,
Melksham, SN12 6ES at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors Richard Wood (Chair of Planning); David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council); Alan Baines (Vice Chair of Planning), Mark Harris and Peter Richardson

Officers: Teresa Strange, Clerk and Lorraine McRandle, Parish Officer

In attendance: Wiltshire Councillors Phil Alford (Melksham Without North & Shurnhold), Nick Holder (Bowerhill); Mark Blackham, Chair of BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group); Joe McCann, Melksham Independent News and 2 members of public

In attendance via Zoom: Councillor John Glover; Members of Shaw & Whitley Community Hub: Nathan Hall (Chair) and Alison Candlin and 2 members of Public

478/22 Welcome, Announcements & Housekeeping

Councillor Wood welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through the fire evacuation procedures for the building.

479/22 To receive Apologies and approval of reasons given

Apologies were received from Councillor John Glover who was on holiday but had joined the meeting via Zoom and was aware whilst he could take part in the meeting as a member of the public, was unable to vote and was not counted as present.

Apologies were received from Councillor Chivers who was in hospital.

Resolved: To accept and approve the reasons for absence of Councillors Glover and Chivers.

480/22 Declarations of Interest

a) To receive Declarations of Interest

Councillor Richardson declared an interest in agenda item 9 as he was a shareholder For Shaw & Whitley Community Hub.

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

None received.

c) To note standing Dispensations relating to planning Applications

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

481/22 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature *Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during consideration of business item 10(a)(ii), where publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.*

The Clerk advised agenda items 10(a)(i) & (ii) be held in closed session as the Site Assessment document undertaken by AECOM was still a draft document and needed to be held in closed session until validated and published.

482/22 Public Participation

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of public to speak to items on the agenda.

Councillor Holder explained there had only been slight amendments to the proposals for 650 dwellings on land at Blackmore Farm (PL/2023/01949) since the pre application proposals had been submitted for public consultation and had contacted the planning officer to request, if they were minded to approve the planning application, that it be 'called in' for consideration at a Wiltshire Council Planning Committee.

Councillor Holder noted most of the comments already received via the Planning Portal were not in support of the application which he felt, demonstrated the inappropriateness of the application. He had also made contact with those residents adjacent to the site, such as Lopes Close, New Road and Sandridge Common to make them aware of the proposals.

With regard to consultation with local residents, Councillor Wood expressed concern at the lack of adjacent residents contacted by Wiltshire Council regarding proposals, noting not all of Lopes Close for instance had initially been contacted, with the Clerk having highlighted this to Wiltshire Council.

Councillor Alford explained he was attending the meeting to listen to debate regarding the proposals for the 650 houses at Blackmore Farm prior to attending the Town Council's Economic Development Committee who were also discussing the same application tonight.

Mark Blackham, Chair, Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG), informed the meeting the group had submitted a response to the proposals, voicing their objections as follows:

- Lack of facilities available to support a large development, such as schools, doctors and dentists which were already over stretched.
- The impact on existing primary school provision, given the proposed primary school would not be built until after most people had moved in.
- The impact on secondary school provision in the town. The number of secondary school aged children for such a large site would also likely exceed the current capacity of Melksham Oak, with no firm plan or funding in place to expand the school or build another secondary school.
- The lack of transport infrastructure. Given the location of the site, there would be a reliance on a car in order to access facilities, with a knock-on effect of more vehicles in the town centre and the additional pollution this would bring.
- The loss of valuable biodiverse and agricultural land.
- Lack of employment growth opportunities in the town and the need for out commuting to other towns for employment, coupled with a poor public transport network will inevitably lead to additional traffic on the existing road infrastructure.
- Concern this development will be seen as a vehicle by Wiltshire Council to build a bypass for Melksham piece by piece, which will involve a road eventually in close proximity to houses in Bowerhill and the impact this would have particularly with regard to pollution.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

The Chair asked if Members were happy to discuss planning application PL/2023/01949 regarding proposals for 650 dwellings at Blackmore Farm before inviting the Chair of Shaw & Whitley Community Hub to speak to their request for the parish council to submit a pre application for Whitley Store on their behalf (Agenda item 9), which Members agreed.

483/22 To consider the following new Planning Applications:

PL/2023/01949: Land at Blackmore Farm, Sandridge Common. Outline permission with some matters reserved for demolition of agricultural outbuildings and development of up to 650 dwellings; land for primary school; land for mixed-use hub (class E/class F); open space; provision of access infrastructure from Sandridge Common (A3102); and provision of all associated infrastructure necessary to facilitate development of the site (access only). Applicant Gleeson Land

Councillor Wood raised a concern how this site would fit in with Wiltshire Council's Local Plan which had not yet been issued and asked the Clerk to explained the status of the current planning policy context

The Clerk explained that Melksham and Melksham Without currently has a made Neighbourhood Plan (July 2021) which covers the period up to 2026. It also had additional protection under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF paragraph 14) that if Wiltshire Council could not prove a 5-year housing land supply, meaning they did not have visibility of housing coming through to prove development was plan led, the Neighbourhood Plan provided protection for 2 years until July 2023. Even if Wiltshire Council could only prove a 3-year housing land supply the presumption in favour of speculative development could be turned down because it is not in a plan.

It was also noted that the Local Plan Review would allocate houses up to 2038 and was expected to be published in Q3 2023. Therefore, Wiltshire Council's current 'plan' (Core Strategy) was considered by developers to be out of date, even though it went up to 2026. Through previous consultation, it was understood Wiltshire Council were looking to allocate a housing figure of c2,500 for the up to 2038 in the Local Plan for the Melksham & Bowerhill area, therefore, there was a plan for plan led development.

Following recent consultation by the Government, it is proposed to make changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is planned to come into force soon (Spring 23), which is understood would remove the requirement for local authorities to prove a 5-year land supply, in addition the paragraph 14 protection is proposed to be extended from 2 to 5 years.

It was noted a pre application meeting had recently taken place with Catesby Estates regarding an adjacent site with proposals for c300 dwellings, with the developers openly admitting they were looking to submit a planning application shortly, as they saw a window of opportunity with the Neighbourhood Plan's current protection about to run out in July and the Local Plan Review not being published as yet.

Whilst the Spatial Planning Officer had not yet submitted their report, their initial thoughts were that the Neighbourhood Plan still had its paragraph 14 protection, therefore the application should be turned down as it is was not plan led.

Councillor Wood felt it was important to understand the Government had set housing targets for local authorities

to adhere to, with it being understood via the Local Plan Review that Melksham would be allocated a housing figure of c2,000-2,500 dwellings, hence there would be significant development in Melksham moving forward. However, both the Parish and Town Council as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, were of the view that piecemeal applications lead to incoherent building and did not allow for strategic planning such as education and medical facilities etc.

Comments: Melksham Without Parish Council **STRONGLY OBJECT** to proposals for 650 dwellings on this site for the following reasons:

- The proposals do not answer the strategic needs of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area and in fact distinctly hinder any future strategic plans for Melksham in terms of master planning via either the Neighbourhood Plan or the wider Wiltshire Local Plan.
- This is speculative and not plan led development, coming through piecemeal and not in conjunction with proposals for the adjacent site currently being consulted on by Catesby Estates for c300 dwellings <https://www.catesbyestates.co.uk/land/land-south-of-snarlton-farm-melksham>
This gives an uncoordinated, disjointed approach, without the means to properly address the infrastructure needs that the impact this number of houses to the area will bring.
- The development is in the open countryside, outside the Settlement Boundary of Melksham & Bowerhill, isolated and therefore unsustainable.
- The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan was made on 8 July 2021 and therefore meets the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) “Paragraph 14” criteria in the light of the current lack of 5-year land supply demonstrated by Wiltshire Council. This has been confirmed by the Planning Inspector for the appeal for another site in the Parish/Neighbourhood Plan area. APP/Y3940/W/21/3285428 Land west of Semington Road 20/07334/OUT. Decision date 30th May 2022.
“19. I therefore conclude that all aspects of Paragraph 14 of the Framework have been satisfied and that the JMNP forms part of the Development Plan. The JMNP complies with Paragraph 14b) of the Framework with respect to the Development Plan as a whole. In the

context of the tilted balance afforded by Paragraph 11d)ii and footnote 8, the policies of the JMNP are an important material consideration.”

It is also noted that following recent consultation on the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) there are imminent proposed changes to the framework in Spring 2023 with regard to removing the requirement for local authorities to prove a 5-year land supply, and the extension of Paragraph 14 from 3 to 5 years.

- The proposals are not part of any housing allocation in the current Melksham Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Group are looking to allocate a meaningful number of houses (200-250) as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Review and are currently undertaking a site selection process. The Local Plan Review (2021) detailed the proposal for a requirement of 3,950 homes for the period 2016-2036, when the number of houses built and in the pipeline is deducted it leaves a further 2,585 houses to be accommodated up until 2036 (now revised to 2038). With both the planned allocations in these two plans that are due for formal consultations in the Summer, there is a clear plan for future plan led housing. The Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan adopted February 2020 confirms that there is no current housing requirement for Melksham in the period 2006 -2026, in fact it has exceeded the current requirement in the Core Strategy. The number of houses allocated in the Core Strategy was 2,370 with 2,235 houses completed 2026-2021 and deliverable commitments of 594 for 2021-2026 (as per the Housing Land Supply Statement in April 22). Since that period there have been several planning applications for large developments in the NHP area.
- The proposals do not adhere to policies within the adopted Neighbourhood Plan, particularly policies 1, 6, 8, 11 and 18 with regard to sustainable design and construction, housing in defined settlements, infrastructure phasing and priorities, sustainable transport & active travel and local distinctive, high-quality design, respectively.
- There is a lack of connectivity with the surrounding area and lack of connection to the distributor road Eastern Way. The only vehicle access proposed is off the A3102. It was noted in response to a Scoping Document request, that the Planning Officer had

stated 'despite the large size of potential development it is not proposed to include land to the East of the development at Eastern Way as a means of access, Eastern Way is effectively a by-pass that has been presumably designed to accommodate future growth of the Eastern side of Melksham and included a roundabout with anticipated access to go further east towards your site.'

- Highway safety concerns with two entrances/exits close together proposed on Sandridge Road, at the bottom of a steep hill and on a bend, with several accidents having taken place along this stretch of road over the years. Whilst it is noted it is proposed one of the entrances/exits will be a roundabout, some of the arrangements for pedestrians around the roundabout are unsatisfactory, particularly as it is noted there is no means of crossing the main road via a central island to access the bus stop on the North Western side of A3102 outbound.

There is a concern at the impact this development will have on the narrow country roads to the North of the site. A large number of residents will be tempted, as drivers from East of Melksham currently do, to use country lanes such as New Road (single track with passing places), Forest Road and through the National Trust village of Lacock via a single-track medieval bridge to pick up the A350 to access Chippenham and the M4. The bridge at Lacock is often closed due to flooding.

- Concern was raised at potential flood risk, noting this had been raised as a concern by several people commenting on the application. Although there will be attenuation, once full, the run off will go into the water courses and unless these are more than adequate, there could be flooding issues.

Concern was expressed at an inaccuracy within Appendix 9.1 of the Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy (Part 1) as it stated 'the nearest Environment Agency (EA) designated main river to the site is Clackers Brook, a tributary of the River Avon, which passes through Melksham and the neighbouring village of Shurnhold'.

Shurnhold is not a village; it is part of Melksham bordering South Brook about half a mile to the West of the River Avon, whereas Clackers Brook flows into

the river from the East. There is therefore concern about the accuracy of other aspects in the report.

- The proposal for a single form entry primary school does not meet Wiltshire Council's criteria of two form entry school provision; confirmed by the draft School Places Strategy in March 23. Any school needs to be in place as soon as residents move in. If not, children will be taken by vehicle to other schools in the Melksham area causing additional traffic, which does not conform with Wiltshire Council policy.

Paragraph 94 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.

The WC draft School Place Strategy (page 17) states: "Wiltshire Council believes that: Parental preference is a key consideration and ability to access a school place close to home within the local community is an important factor.

The draft School Places Strategy (page 89) states: "At present, there are clearly insufficient primary school places available in the town to cater for the proposed Local Plan housing". It also adds that the closest primary school, Forest & Sandridge, has a capacity of 420 and is full, with a s106 contribution secured to expand the school to 2.5FE. With only 5% of urban primary school capacity at present, it is clear that there are no spaces for the children moving into this proposed development in the current schools; let alone choice of schools.

- Early years: Within the Planning Statement it says that a children's nursery could be accommodated within the community venue. There needs to be a firm plan for the early years provision and s106 contributions to provide for the new young children that this development will bring to the area. Page 21 of the draft School Places Strategy states: "WC believes that where additional school places are needed because of new housing development, as far as possible the costs should fall on the landowners and/or developers, by way of contributions falling within the concept of planning obligations". This should apply to Early Years provision too.

- For secondary education, the draft School Places Strategy document states "The number of pupils attending Melksham Oak is forecast to grow significantly over the next few years as larger cohorts being to feed through from primary schools and as new housing is completed. The recent expansion means that the school now has a PAN of 300 which will be sufficient to meet the needs of current housing. If the proposed Local Plan houses are taken forward, there would be a significant shortfall of secondary places. Whilst the school site is large, expanding the school over 12FE would make it the largest school in the Country and would probably be considered too large to operate from one site". Again, there is evidence that the secondary school places are only sufficient for the current housing in the pipeline, and not for any new school places being generated by speculative development. This is why any future development needs to be planned strategically.
- Concern was raised at the safety of children wishing to access Melksham Oak School, as they would need to use Eastern Way and compete with the traffic, particularly as there is still no rear access to the school. There are already many concerns raised at the number of pupils on the A365 pavement, both pedestrians and cyclists, and evidence of regular accidents and near misses as the flow of children at school opening and finishing times is wider than the pavement can cope with.
- Due to the piecemeal approach of this development, although it shows a primary school on the plans, there is no access to the school from adjoining land, which are in the SHELAA (Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment), form part of a wider site in the Local Plan Review in 2021 and have a current public consultation for 300 dwellings with a planning application planned shortly.
- Whilst there is a proposal to have a pedestrian/cycle access using part of Browns Lane bridleway on Eastern Way, there is still no other means of connecting to existing development and services East of Melksham.
- In order to facilitate access to this development a number of farm building and facilities are due to be demolished and removed. There is concern whether this will allow for the continued viability of the farm holding as 50% of the farm would remain as open land. This is also a loss of agricultural land.

- The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan is currently under review and has a number of emerging evidence documents to underpin revised and new policies. The draft AECOM Site Assessment report 2023 has assessed this site. It excluded it from the initial first sieve of sites, at Stage 1, with the following comments:
 “The site is removed from the settlement boundary. The site may be appropriate to be developed alongside Site 3678, 3683, 3701 and 3525 as a large urban extension of Melksham which connects to the Melksham Bypass. The site contains deciduous woodland which have priority habitats. The site also includes the designated heritage assets of Blackmore House. The site is exposed to views across from Sandridge Hill.” When the report has been validated by the NHP Steering Group we will forward the published version to the Planning Officer.

Whilst the parish council **strongly object** to the proposals, the parish council ask that the following be included, if it were to be approved:

- Adherence to policies of the current Melksham Neighbourhood Plan and those of the emerging review of the Plan, including evidence documents as they come on stream, such as the Housing Needs Assessment, Design Guide etc
<https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/np2-evidence-base>
- Whilst noting it is proposed one of the access/exits will include a roundabout, the parish council would like to see the second entrance/exit also as a roundabout, in order to ease traffic flow.
- The Parish Council seek the provision of play equipment, above that required by the West Wiltshire District Council saved Policy in the Core Strategy, which is also imaginative to encourage active play.
- They believe that the size of the development will warrant both a LEAP (Local Equipped Area of Play) and a NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play) and a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) so that there is a range of suitable equipment for all ages; children and teenagers.
- The Parish Council also wish to enter into discussions to be the nominated party for any proposed LEAPs & NEAPs and seek the following:
 - A maintenance sum in the s106 agreement for continued maintenance of the play areas.
 - Safety Surfacing extended beyond the play area fence line (by at least 30 cm) and for the whole

area to be surfaced as such, with no joints to prevent future expansion gaps, and no grass that will require maintenance

- Tarmac paths provided not hoggin.
 - No wooden equipment provided.
 - Dark Green Metal bow top fencing provided.
 - Clean margins around the edges, no planting.
 - Bins provided outside the play areas.
 - Easy access provided for maintenance vehicles.
 - Public access gates painted red.
 - No inset symbols provided in the safety surfacing, which should be one solid surface.
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- Public Open Space which is regularly mown and not all for wildflower areas, to allow for children to kick a ball around informally.
 - Equipment installed for teenagers (it is noted this is proposed within the site, which is welcome).
 - Whilst proposals to include allotments is welcomed, the Parish Council ask that these are fenced in, with access to water, as well as a car park provided and security measures installed.
 - Circular pedestrian routes around the site.
 - The provision of benches and bins where there are circular pedestrian routes and public open space and the regular emptying of bins to be reflected in any future maintenance contribution.
 - Connectivity with existing housing development.
 - There are practical art contributions, with the Parish Council being involved in public art discussions
 - Speed limit within the site is 20mph and self-enforcing.
 - The development is tenant blind. The parish council draw attention to the recent Housing Needs Assessment undertaken as part of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Review, which reflects the current needs of the Melksham area.
https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/files/ugd/c4c117_4c8411b64439472fbfcf8e856799e2c9.pdf
 - Given the development is adjacent to existing dwellings on Sandridge Common and Lopes Close, the design is such that the layout is garden to existing garden. The design layout should also take account of the impact on any potential new dwellings on the strip of land to the West of this site adjacent to Eastern Way and to the South.

- The road layout within the development is such that there are no dead ends in order that residents and refuse lorries do not need to reverse out of roads.
- Contribution to educational and medical facilities within the Melksham area.
- There is visible delineation between pavement and roads. Shared spaces which are easily identifiable.
- Tree planting is not adjacent to property boundaries, in order they do not cause issues later on with growing over the boundary to resident's properties or causing shade on gardens.
- Whilst the parish council welcome a contribution to enhance public transport, the proposals did not go far enough, particularly as reference is made to existing bus services which do not serve Melksham Railway Station, with the nearest bus stop being some distance away from the Railway Station.
- Members welcome the provision of bus shelters with the capabilities for real-time information and therefore ask that proposed bus shelters are tall enough with a power supply to enable this. To give good shelter from the weather, shelters are provided with sides, with a bench seat rather than a perch seat.
- Significant land be set aside to enable a functional community hub to serve the whole community. The parish council request a community centre large enough to include additional health facilities (with room for GP clinics, as well as complimentary services like physio, chiroprapist, osteopath etc.) as well as associated facilities to service and provide a 3G pitch.
- Provision of a Local Centre, similar to nearby Verbena Court, with the provision of electric car charging points (in line with Policy 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan). Contribution towards green initiatives i.e., provision of charging points, local green energy production and battery storage for the community hub.
- Whilst noting and welcoming proposed improvements to pedestrian access to Praters Lane from Sandridge Road around Lopes Close, the parish council have a concern at surfacing Praters Lane as this may be open to abuse by 4 x 4s and motorbikes; this could be overcome by installing gates, bollards or horse stiles for instance. The parish council seek improvements to existing Rights of Way in the area, which are understood to have been submitted by Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way Team as part of their response to the proposals at public consultation stage and ask that Right of Way MELW30 becomes a

bridleway to connect up bridleways at MELW40 & 41, particularly as there are many stables in this area.

- Ecological measures such as bird and bat boxes, bee bricks, reptile refugia and hibernacula with all these enhancements (types, numbers, position etc) marked on plans and drawings.

It was agreed to discuss planning application PL/2023/01008 regarding the proposed new Highways depot at Lancaster Road prior inviting the Chair of Shaw & Whitley Community Hub to speak to Item 9 on the agenda.

Councillor Alford left the meeting at 7.55pm.

PL/2023/01008: 32 Lancaster Road, Bowerhill. New Highways depot, including the installation of modular buildings for office block, portacabins for operative welfare, works vehicle parking, material storage, external lighting and car parking. Applicant Milestone Infrastructure Ltd

Standing Orders were suspended to allow Councillor Holder to speak to this item.

Councillor Holder expressed disappointment that the application had been submitted after work on site had started, with discussions having taken place earlier in the day with the Leader of Wiltshire Council, the Chief Executive/Head of Service in relation to allowing its contractors to commence works on site and apply for retrospective planning permission.

Councillor Holder explained he had only been made aware of activity on site since 23 March via a local resident and subsequently spoken to officers at Wiltshire Council to confirm the timing of the application. Wiltshire Council confirmed the application had been received via the Planning Portal on 8 February, with the applicant (Milestone) having signed the application on 1 February. Wiltshire Council subsequently made several requests to the applicant for additional information, with the final piece of information being received on 15 March, resulting in Wiltshire Council validating the application and uploading to the Planning Portal on 4 April.

Councillor Holder explained Wiltshire Councillors were not informed of planning applications in their ward until they were uploaded to the Planning Portal and therefore,

4 April was the first indication of the application being received.

It was understood Planning Enforcement had also been approached on 20 March prior to the planning application being validated on the planning portal.

Councillor Holder explained the Leader of Wiltshire Council and Cabinet colleagues were angry and disappointed this had happened, as it gave the impression there was one rule for residents and one for Wiltshire Council contractors, which was not the case. However, there was an understanding of the operational requirements in order to enable Milestone to get up and running prior to their contract commencing, especially as the site previously occupied by their predecessor, Ringway, would not have been large enough or vacant in time for them to take over the site and get ready to be fit for purpose to start their contract on 1st April. However, this should not have been at the failure to consult effectively with the local community.

Councillor Holder highlighted proposals included reducing the carbon footprint by including EV charging points, as well as other energy saving proposals.

Councillor Holder explained that having visited the site, he did not see any issues with the proposals, particularly as the site was previously a Highway depot, but was happy to 'call in' the application if the Planning Committee so wished.

Councillor Wood wished to 'put to bed' rumours regarding this application that it was related to the waste recycling centre which it clearly was not.

Concern was raised at the number of parking spaces proposed and whether this was adequate for the number of employees and visitors, particularly as people could be tempted to park on Lancaster Road.

Comments: Whilst having no objection to this application and welcoming the green policies being pursued by Milestone, the parish council express regret that the application is retrospective. The council ask that consideration be given to whether the proposed parking provision is adequate.

[PL/2023/00478](#): Land off Angelica Avenue. Outline application for up to 11 dwellings with associated access road (All

Matters Reserved). Applicant DWH South West Ltd. (please note this application is within Melksham Town). To support the comments made by Melksham Town Council regarding the impact on a proposed new community centre East of Melksham.

The Clerk explained the Council had not previously been consulted on this application, as it was in the town. However, it was felt important following discussions with the Chair, that the Planning Committee support the objections made by the Town Council in response to this application, given the experience of the parish council with regard to building a village hall adjacent to a residential area and the implications this brought with it, such as not having opening windows and a reduction in opening hours etc.

Comments: To support the objections made by Melksham Town Council with regard to overdevelopment, coalescence and the impact of the development on the proposed East of Melksham Community Centre.

Both Councillor Holder and Mark Blackham left the meeting at this point.

PL/2023/01799: 113A Beanacre. New access gates to front of boundary joining the public highway. New Aco drainage channel to be installed with soakaway to manage surface water entering the highway. Applicant Neil Bridgeman

Comments: No objection.

PL/2023/01839: 23 Catalina Court, Bowerhill. Proposed double storey rear extension. Applicants Mr and Mrs Honeysett.

Comments: No objection.

PL/2023/02735: Beanacre. Removal of a 10m section of hedgerow to facilitate installation of a new rising main to connect properties on Westlands Lane and The Laurels to the existing sewerage network that are currently served by septic tanks and private package treatment plants. This is an amendment to HRN L/2022/06195 due to altered alignment of rising main. Hedgerow to be replanted on completion of works. Applicant Wessex Water.

Comments: No objection.

484/22 Revised Plans: To comment on any revised plans on planning

applications received within the required **timeframe (14 days)**

No revised plans had been received.

485/22 Planning Enforcement: To note any new planning enforcement queries raised and updates on previous enforcement queries.

Concern was raised at the size of a double garage currently being built at Kays Cottage, 489 Semington Road, which appeared to be larger than those proposed in the planning application.

Unfortunately, on looking at the dimensions on the proposed plan, it was difficult to ascertain the exact measurements proposed, therefore, it was suggested officers seek clarification on this.

486/22 Whitley Stores Pre-Application. To submit pre application on behalf of Shaw & Whitley Community Hub for a new village store in the car park of The Pear Tree, Top Lane, Whitley.

Standing Orders were suspended to enable Nathan Hall, Chair of Shaw & Whitley Community Hub to speak to this item.

Nathan Hall explained himself and Alison Candlin, Shaw & Whitley Community Hub were present to ask if the parish council would submit a pre planning application on the group's behalf to Wiltshire Council.

It was explained that the proposal was made in partnership with the landlord of the pub, and was for a wooden clad community shop on the site of the car park of the Pear Tree. Pre application advice was currently being sought from Wiltshire Council, in order to be aware of any issues prior to submitting the plan. As The Pear Tree was a listed building, a draft Heritage Assessment had already been undertaken. The proposal had also been put before the Community Hub members who were fully supportive of the proposal. It was confirmed any advice received following submission of the pre application would be taken on board prior to submitting a Full Application and would be shared with the Parish Council.

The Planning Committee thanked the group for their exemplary and professional documentation which accompanied the pre application and the work involved in collating the information.

Members welcomed the proposal, which was sensitive to the listed status of The Pear Tree Pub and improved the parking situation from the previous location on Tope Lane. Members also welcomed the possibility of making use of solar energy on the site.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

It was noted that the Full Council were happy with the principle of themselves submitting the pre-application pending the Planning Committee reviewing the application, and there being no legal implications or obligations on the parish council .

Resolved: To submit the Whitley Stores pre planning application to Wiltshire Council on behalf of the Shaw & Whitley Community Hub.

487/22 Planning Policy

a) Neighbourhood Planning

i)C) Update on the Neighbourhood Plan Review and to consider any time critical requests before the next Steering Group meeting.

The Clerk provided an update on recent meetings regarding the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

ii)C) To review initial draft site selection, following Housing Task Group meeting held on 12 April.

The Clerk explained the Neighbourhood Plan Housing Task Group had met to review the draft Site Assessment Report undertaken by AECOM with subsequent informal meetings planned with Wiltshire Council later in the week. It was agreed that the group needed to undertake further work to drill down into reasonable alternatives and a further meeting was arranged for Friday, 21 April

b) To note how many empty homes are in Melksham Without and Melksham Town, following a Freedom of Information Request by a Councillor and consider next steps

The Clerk explained that following a Freedom of Information Request to Wiltshire Council by Councillor Chivers, it had been ascertained there were 180 empty homes in Melksham with 50 in Melksham Without. This was a significant number when considered in relationship to the number of houses that were being allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan review at c200-250.

It was noted as part of proposals in the Levelling Up Bill, vacant premises in the High Streets would have to be let after a certain period of time.

Recommendation: To write to Wiltshire Council to ascertain if there was anything they could do regarding empty homes in the Melksham area.

c) To consider submitting further comments to existing and new planning applications, further to the response to the Wiltshire

Council draft School Places Strategy Consultation and other next steps

Members thanked the Clerk for the work undertaken in producing a comprehensive response to Wiltshire Council's draft School Places Strategy.

The Clerk clarified that the response to the consultation had already been submitted, but had highlighted those responses which could be raised as additional comments for current planning applications.

The Clerk explained she had notified the Council's responses to the consultation and Members frustration at the lack of joined up thinking with regard to educational provision in Wiltshire with the Area Board councillors and the Town Council, with Councillor Jonathon Seed suggesting the School Places Officer is invited to a future Area Board meeting, which Members welcomed.

With regard to the proposed footpath to the rear of Melksham Oak school, the Clerk highlighted that within the draft School Places Strategy it mentioned the provision of safe walking routes to schools for pedestrians and cyclists and suggested highlighting this to the officers responsible for the footpath project to the rear of Melksham Oak.

Concern was expressed at the lack of forward thinking with regard to additional secondary school provision to accommodate future students, given the number of new homes currently proposed and those for the future via Wiltshire Council's Local Plan Review.

Councillor Glover noted the proposed route for students from the proposed new developments at Berryfield was via the Longford Road estate and across the new crossing on the A365 to the proposed new primary school at Pathfinder Place. The footpath was not tarmacked and often muddy, therefore, this could encourage people to walk via an alternative route, such as Champion Drive, then out onto the new roundabout proposed at the bottom of Eastern Way, then walking back to the crossing, which was equally unsafe and a very circuitous route.

It was understood Lavington Secondary School had announced they would be closing their sixth form, which could have a knock-on effect, with some students deciding to go to Melksham Oak from local villages.

It was noted children from the Paxcroft development at Hilperton had to travel to the other side of Trowbridge in order to access secondary education provision and therefore, parents could choose to come to Melksham instead, which again would have an impact on the number of secondary school places available.

Recommendation 1: To forward comments raised as part of this consultation as additional comments for existing planning applications currently being considered.

Recommendation 2: To highlight the comments regarding the safe walking routes to school to the officers at Wiltshire Council co-ordinating the project for the footpath to the rear of Melksham Oak.

Recommendation 3: To follow up the concerns of the lack of future secondary education places with the Melksham Area Board members.

d) Provision of new play areas within new developments. To note response from Wiltshire Council regarding lower provision calculations for the West Wiltshire Area

The Clerk explained it had recently come to light, following frustration expressed by officers at Wiltshire Council that the ‘calculator’ for play provision on new developments in West Wiltshire was less than elsewhere in Wiltshire, as the policy referred to was a ‘saved’ policy from the West Wiltshire District Council days and had not been updated. However, with the new Local Plan Review hopefully this would be rectified. The Clerk explained Councillor Jonathon Seed had been made aware of this issue and had followed it up. Councillor Glover queried why Wiltshire Council could not exceed the recommended play area policy requirement, as he understood this was done elsewhere.

The Clerk asked if Members wished to request more play provision above than required via the saved West Wilts District Council policy.

Recommendation: To add to the list of requests to developers any play equipment provided, to be above that required under the West Wiltshire District Council saved policy in the Core Strategy

Recommendation 2: To submit additional comments to current planning applications that any play provision to be provided is above that required under the West Wiltshire District Council saved policy in the Core Strategy.

488/22 S106 Agreements and Developer meetings: (Standing Item)

a) To note update on ongoing and new S106 Agreements

i) Hunters Wood/The Acorns:

- **To note any updates on footpath to rear of Melksham Oak School**

The Clerk explained there was no update to report.

ii) Bowood View:

- **Update on play area adoption**

The Clerk confirmed that the Land Transfer document had been signed, and the council's solicitors had confirmed that the play area would be handed over to the parish council at on 18 April.

The Clerk informed the meeting she had suggested that Bellway install the tarmacked footpath in the play area whilst the Heras fencing was in place and also queried why the parish council would be responsible for taking down Bellway's fencing. The Council's solicitor had responded to say Bellway would appear to not want to compromise on this.

The Clerk suggested whilst the Heras fencing was still in place to go ahead with installing the tarmac footpath (either Bellway or the parish council, having previously agreed the council would undertake this work if Bellway refused), rather than open now and close again to do this work, which Members agreed.

Councillor Glover left the meeting by zoom at 8.42pm.

i) Pathfinder Place:

- **To note latest update from Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder/Taylor Wimpey on outstanding issues.**

The Clerk explained the refuge island on Pathfinder Way now had bollards installed, with reflective strips.

It was noted the footpath link to Birch Grove to Tedder Gardens was nearly complete, with a drop kerb still to be installed on the Birch Grove side.

Recommendation: To remind Taylor Wimpey they had previously agreed to resurface Pathfinder Way on its Eastern side and to ask for an additional footway from the bus shelter on Pathfinder Way (Eastern side) where there was a desire line.

- **To note the Section 106 maintenance contribution of £64,763.52 (£58k index linked) has been invoiced to Taylor Wimpey by Wiltshire Council**

The Clerk informed the meeting she had requested the maintenance contribution relating to the Davey Play area, which the parish council had adopted, be released. Wiltshire Council confirmed they had invoiced Taylor Wimpey £64,763.52 (£58k

index linked) for the Section 106 maintenance contribution associated with their Pathfinder Place development.

b) To note any S106 decisions made under delegated powers

None.

c) Contact with developers.

The Clerk explained Catesby Estates were due to go out to public consultation regarding their proposals for c300 dwellings on land at Snarlton Farm.

A residents' leaflet was due to be delivered later this week, with a full-page advert to be included in the 27 April edition of Melksham News. A consultation website was due to go live on 20 April. The closing date for responses to the consultation would be Sunday, 21 May. Catesby Estates were happy to give the parish council a summary of the feedback on the consultation, they had also provided a version of the advert for the parish council to post on social media from 20 April. A public exhibition would also be held at Melksham Community Campus on 10 May.

The Clerk explained Catesby Estates had asked if the Council had any further feedback on the type of community facilities they would like to see onsite or if the Council would prefer financial contributions towards off site facilities to let them know in order this could be fed back to the wider team. The Clerk explained the Council had discussed community facilities at the last Full Council meeting and this would be forwarded to Catesby Estates.

The Clerk explained an item regarding a response to the public consultation would be on the Planning Committee agenda for 15 May, in order to submit a response by the 21 May deadline. Melksham News were also looking for quotes from the Council in order to include with the public consultation notice in the next edition of Melksham News on 27 April.

The Clerk noted that interestingly the landowner of Snarlton Farm was objecting to proposals for the adjacent site at Blackmore Farm for c650 dwellings, as the developer proposed to divert pedestrians along his boundary which would also require the cutting down of several trees on their land.

Meeting closed at 9.25pm

Signed.....
Chair, Full Council 24 April 2024