

MINUTES of the Planning Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 4th February 2025 at Bowerhill Village Hall, Halifax Road, Bowerhill Melksham, SN12 6SN at 7:00pm

Present: Councillors Richard Wood (Committee Chair), John Glover (Council Chair), David Pafford (Council Vice-Chair), Alan Baines (Committee Vice-Chair), Peter Richardson, Mark Harris and Martin Franks.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Marianne Rossi (Finance & Amenities Officer).

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder (Bowerhill) attended at the start of the meeting to make a statement and then left. Wiltshire Councillor Tamara Reay (Devizes Rural West) attended as Councillor Holder has recused himself for commenting on the application for Gompels warehouse (PL/2024/11426).

There were 91 attendees at the meeting, for the Gompels warehouse planning application. By a show of hands approx. 40% were Gompels employees with residents of Bath Road and Bowerhill Lane as well as the wider Bowerhill and Seend areas in attendance. There were also representatives from Melksham Town Council, Seend Parish Council, Wiltshire Councillors and Dr Brian Mathew, MP in attendance to listen to the views raised.

Melksham Without parish councillors Robert Shea-Simonds and Anne Sullivan attended the meeting as observers.

There were 4 members of the public attending remotely via Zoom.

394/24 Welcome & Housekeeping:

Councillor Wood welcomed everyone to the meeting. As this was a new meeting venue, Mark Harris (Chair of Bowerhill Village Hall) explained the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire. The housekeeping message in relation to the Zoom chat feature was read out. Everyone present was made aware that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved. It was noted that the council were not using their usual recording equipment and so could not guarantee the quality of the recording.

Attendees' attention was drawn to the paperwork on their chairs, which included a list of what were, and were not, considered "Material Planning Considerations". There was a form to fill in with contact details if attendees wanted to be kept up to date on any planning application for consideration at the meeting, if there were revised plans or when/if it went to a Wiltshire Council planning meeting for example.

395/24 Announcements:

- a) The Clerk reported that an application had been received for 68 dwellings at Land north of Berryfield Lane (PL/2025/00626) following a public consultation before Christmas.

Resolved: The Planning Committee meeting, Monday 24th February, when this application will be considered, will be held at Berryfield Village Hall as a bigger venue, with a slighter later start time than usual, at 7.30pm.

- b) Wiltshire Council's Gypsies & Travellers Development Plan was for consideration by Cabinet earlier in the day and then would go to their Full Council meeting on 25th February. Subject to approval it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination with all representations received from its earlier public consultation passed to the Inspector.

396/24 Apologies:

There were no apologies as all members of the Planning Committee were present.

397/24 Declarations of Interest:

Councillor John Glover declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6c, planning application for 14 Wellington Drive, as a neighbour.

Councillor Peter Richardson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6a, planning application for Gompels warehouse as he knew the Operations Manager through community work in Shaw & Whitley and in item 7a Land at West Hill as he knew the applicant.

Councillor Martin Franks declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6a, planning application for Gompels warehouse as the company he works does business with Gompels, albeit he works for a different division.

Councillor David Pafford, Councillor Mark Harris and Councillor John Glover declared non-pecuniary interests as they lived in Bowerhill and knew many of the residents attending the meeting.

398/24 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting: None

399/24 Parish Council standing dispensations relating to planning applications:

It was noted that the parish council has a dispensation lodged with Wiltshire Council to deal with S106 agreements relating to planning applications within the parish.

400/24 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

The Clerk suggested that agenda item 11a be in a closed session if the members were minded not to approve the comments to the Neighbourhood Plan Examiner as developers would be able to hear any deliberations. Agenda item 12)a)i) to be held in closed session as to discuss the start of financial negotiations with

Gleasons for a potential community centre funding contribution from the Blackmore Farm application.

Resolved: Agenda item 11a, if members wished to discuss, and agenda item 12 a)i) to be held in closed session.

401/24 Public Participation:

Councillor Wood explained the procedure for public participation and asked individuals to not repeat comments already made, but to come forward with different aspects.

The Council suspended Standing Orders for a period of public participation.

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder read out a statement to correct comments on social media that he, and other councillors, were corrupt and displaying inappropriate behaviour with regards to the Gompels warehouse planning application. Councillor Holder set out the timeline of events from the publication of the planning application, when he met residents, sought advice from the Monitoring Officer and recused himself from commenting on the application as the applicant is known to Councillor Holder and his son works for Gompels Healthcare. Councillor Tamara Reay, from the adjoining division, was nominated to comment on the planning application in his place. Councillor Holder reiterated that he refuted any impropriety on his behalf and that he had acted quickly and transparently and had notified officers of Wiltshire Council and the parish council in a very timely manner. He went on to comment that whilst tensions run high when there are contentious planning applications, that it is no excuse for pejorative language, accusations and threatening behaviour. Parish councillors are volunteers working hard for their community and reminded residents that the parish council were consultees and not decision makers.

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder left the meeting at 7.20pm.

Sam Gompels spoke to the application, first explaining how the family business developed from its early days with his parents in 1967 who opened their pharmacy shop and sold medical supplies to care homes and factories too. The current operation at the Bowerhill warehouse ran out of room six years ago and they had been engaging with Wiltshire Council and landowners since then looking for alternative sites; bidding three times on the ex-Christie Miller sports centre site which Wiltshire Council ultimately retained for their own use. The lack of space meant that they missed out on a large contract, and to bring the Consortium back to Wiltshire. Sam Gompels listed the sites that they had looked at and they were either not available or had options for housing development. The former Cooper Tires site is allocated in the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan for some housing and the rest of the site is in a flood zone which is not compatible with the many absorbent products they stock. Current employees are valuable, and they do not want to commute to towns and areas outside of Melksham which will add to their commute and additional time to their working day.

The proposed building would be twice the size if its height was halved and therefore take up more green space. It is not as tall as the Cereal Partners warehouse on the

A350 and a smaller footprint than Melksham Oak school. It will provide 275 jobs and a further 1,000 indirect jobs. They have added as much screening as they can, and are open to suggestions as to how to help it blend in. The site narrowly missed out on being allocated for housing in the draft Local Plan, and they have had offers from 16 developers for housing on that site, as well as one for another use.

Sam Gompels went on to explain the community benefits that his company provides in terms of charitable works and donations, the links with other local businesses, including Gompels pharmacies, the range of jobs provided and the company's green credentials.

Wiltshire Councillor Tamara Reay explained that she was the Ward member for Devizes Rural West, which covered from Seend to Potterne. It includes the village of Seend Cleve that will overlook the proposed warehouse, which is why Seend Parish Council considered the application last week. As Councillor Holder explained, Councillor Reay had stepped in to "call in" the application for a Committee decision, and it may be considered by the Strategic Committee rather than the Western Area Committee. Details of the Committee members are on the Wiltshire Council website. An officer report will be prepared with recommendations to the Committee.

Councillor Richard Wood explained the process of the public participation at Wiltshire Council Committee meetings and that residents could attend.

Brian Mathew MP explained that he had been contacted by residents and had met some of them locally and was pleased to see the turnout of local people engaged in the planning process. He was attending the meeting to listen to the views raised.

Councillor Saffi Rabey explained that she was the Chair of the Melksham Town Council Economic Development Committee who were keeping a close eye on this application and would be considering it themselves, with all welcome to attend.

Members of the public spoke and raised the following points **against** the application:

- To consider the warehouse to be sited on the Bowerhill Sports Field, and the parish council/Fields in Trust swap their land and have a mini country park on the Gompels land to the south of the A365.
- A Bowerhill Lane resident provided the councillors with a handout with photos that they had annotated. They were concerned with the scale of the building and the amount of concrete as part of the construction. The emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan had not detailed any commercial land at this site. It will make an enormous impact on their property values. The land was green belt, and agricultural land, the building is in the wrong place. Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy 34 on Additional Employment Land states that it must be appropriate to its surroundings and not affect residential amenity. The resident currently has a view of Rowden Hill that will be replaced with a view of the warehouse and will no longer be able to watch the sun rise from his bedroom. Flood risk to the septic tank users on Bowerhill Lane was also a factor and the effect on numerous wildlife.

- Gompels have been messed around and are as much victims as the residents. It's a historical failure of the local authority. Gompels are not choosing to build on this site but are forced to build on this site. But the lack of not finding the right site is not a reason to build on this imperfect site. The parish council bought the sports field for a peppercorn and have invested money in improving the asset, but they should consider doing a land swap with Gompels; this should be pursued. There is also a failing with the land south of the existing warehouse, which is the preference for Gompels, and would have no environmental impact, or residential impact. It's a massive failing of Wiltshire Council to have allowed this to be sold to a land bank and Wiltshire Council are urged to take immediate measures to tell the landowner that they will not designate it for housing, that they allocate it as commercial land and offer it to Gompels. A solution should be found to suit everybody's needs.
- A Bowerhill Lane resident commented that the building proposed is a monstrosity. Local businesses are frustrated with the lack of employment land in Melksham to develop and focus should be on lobbying Wiltshire Council to redesignate the land to the south of Gompels existing warehouse and the land owners could still make a relative profit. Gompels could move to commercial land being promoted between Melksham and Chippenham, or the parish council should encourage Wiltshire Council to develop the land south of the existing Gompels site as commercial land.
- A resident of Old Loves Farm talked to the impact on the Grade II listed farmhouse as a heritage asset, and that the development of the warehouse would lead to more development in the area. Their other concerns were overshadowing. The 4-storey warehouse would be the first thing people would see when approaching Bowerhill. There are other viable sites. Why would the business have to relocate if unable to proceed, the business could restrict the orders that they take, not expand and not lose jobs in the Melksham area.
- A resident of Shails Lane explained the issue with security lights from adjoining buildings on his garden, and the lack of sunshine apart from mid-summer.
- A resident of Pathfinder Place raised concerns for all residents about the impact of increased traffic, in particular for the school. The merits of traffic from a potential housing development on the site vs HGV traffic for the warehouse was debated.
- A resident of Bowerhill expressed concerns of the increase in traffic but felt that housing development traffic was light compared to heavy traffic for this proposal and that it would lead to more warehouses in the future on agricultural land, with a preference for housing.
- The economic case in the Design & Access statement have not been validated, documents have not been signed. The application has 17 loading bays, and an HGV can be loaded in 45 minutes, so that means that 1000 HGVs could be loaded in a week and 2,500 HGV movements if they were operating 24/7. The scale of the building is out of all proportion.
- A resident of Bath Road who lives in a Grade II listed building commented that they feel the traffic that passes as they shake their building, with many of the

HGVs speeding. The staff will also be impacting on the traffic with the impact of their cars on the A365.

- A Seend resident explained that both parties, Gompels and residents, should be united in searching for an alternative site elsewhere.
- A Bowerhill resident felt that this application would give another reason for the proposed Bypass to be built.
- Comments have been directed to a choice of either housing or an industrial development of which many would like to see neither, and there is not a planning application for housing at present, but if there was the proper infrastructure should be put in place.
- A resident suggested that the workforce at the current site could work a night shift, and not 7am to 7pm as they currently do, which would mean that they would not need more space.
- A resident suggested that the Christie Miller site could be used for the Gompels warehouse rather than for a strategic transport depot for Wiltshire Council. Wiltshire Councillor Tamara Reay commented that she would ask Councillor Nick Holder to respond to query formally.
- A Bowerhill resident asked how they can help Wiltshire Council hear their concerns about the lack of employment land in Melksham. Councillor Richard Wood explained that it's an issue that the parish council have raised for many years. Wiltshire Councillor Tamara Reay referred residents to the draft Local Plan process, which is currently awaiting inspection.
- The Chairman of the "Stop the Bypass" group commented that Wiltshire Council had taken on housing targets that they didn't need to do and are allocating sites without infrastructure.

Members of the public spoke and raised the following points for the application:

- A Gompels employee explained that many employees were given stability from the latest warehouse development 5 years ago, when covid meant that they had lost their jobs elsewhere. It was not just about Sam Gompels, but about the workforce and the stability it gave the employees and their families.
- A Gompels employee explained that "goods in" are in a relatively small time window of 9am to 2pm and not impacting on the highway for a long time duration.
- A Gompels Pharmacy employee explained that Gompels Healthcare supply 30% of the pharmacy operations which would affect their businesses if they were not able to expand and move elsewhere. There are currently three generations of the Gompels family working across the two businesses, with 150 staff; many of them present at the meeting tonight.
- A Gompels employee explained that the majority of their freight is from Southampton docks and the HGVs already travel past the proposed site on the A365 to get to the existing site on the industrial estate.

Approx 30 member of the attendees then left the meeting at 8.13pm.

The meeting reconvened.

402/24 Planning Applications: The Council considered the following applications and made the following comments:

- a) **PL/2024/11426: Land to the South of A365 Bath Road and West of Turnpike Garage, Melksham, Wiltshire:** Construction of warehouse with office space, parking and associated landscaping including site access. Applicant: Gompels Healthcare Ltd.

Comments:

Melksham Without Parish Council recognises and respects the conflict and dilemma between the need for additional employment land and the loss of a greenfield site, its proximity to a heritage asset and the potential to impact the residential amenity and landscape. It is unfortunate that no other suitable employment land in Melksham has been found to accommodate the site; or been allocated in the emerging Local Plan.

The parish council unanimously resolved on balance, to have **NO OBJECTIONS** to this application but do have serious concerns about some aspects and therefore request conditions/mitigation as detailed below.

Melksham Without Parish Council believes that the application meets the requirements for Additional Employment Land policies in Core Strategy (34) and the emerging Local Plan (64).

From the adopted Core Strategy Policy 34:

**“Proposals for employment development (use classes B1, B2 or B8¹)
..... Outside the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres, developments will be supported that:**

- i. **are adjacent to these settlements and seek to retain or expand businesses currently located within or adjacent to the settlements”**

“and are supported by evidence that they are required to benefit the local economic and social needs”

From the emerging Local Plan Policy 64

“Proposals for employment development (within use classes B2, B8 or E(g)(i-iii)) will be supported on unallocated sites within or adjacent to Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Services Centres and Large and Small Villages where they are appropriate to the role and function of the settlement.”

“and would not undermine the delivery of strategic employment allocations”

¹ B8 Storage or distribution

Adopted Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 1 and Emerging NHP2 Policy 10: Employment Sites

NHP1 4.11.2 & NHP2 4.10.2: The level of out commuting to neighbouring towns and jobs along the M4 corridor is high, and community engagement confirms that people want to work closer to their homes. Expansion of new employment opportunities with the Plan area is considered desirable to reduce the amount of out commuting to deliver sustainable travel movements.”

The parish council are very keen to safeguard existing employment and provide space for the expansion of jobs in the Melksham and Bowerhill area. With the Local Plan and emerging Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 housing site allocations, current planning applications for large housing developments and the changing landscape in light of the recent NPPF update, they feel strongly that Melksham should not develop any further as a dormitory town; jobs must be provided for the residents who currently live in the town and parish, and for those moving into the new houses in the future. Out commuting contributes to more car travel, congestion, and pollution, and takes money away from the Melksham community for local spend in shops and cafes. The parish council want to see Melksham, and its local economy, thrive.

The parish council have previously expressed their concerns at the lack of Employment Land allocated in the draft Local Plan. Only 5 Hectares for industrial use is allocated, with 2 Hectares of that allocation already approved with a change of use to “Office and Research & Development” on the Blackmore Farm development (Local Plan Policy 18, Planning Application PL/2023/11188) – see attached email detailing concerns raised, and awareness of businesses in Bowerhill looking for expansion space. “Planning for Melksham” September 2023 for the draft Local Plan Paragraph 19 states “The findings of an Employment Land Review has stated that businesses and agents report significant demand for expansion space in the area against a shortage of available sites and premises. This review has recommended that new employment sites are allocated to ensure there is a sufficient supply of employment land to meet forecast demand over the Local Plan Period”. The Place Shaping Priorities “PSP2 Reducing Out commuting” states “Reducing out-commuting through and improved employment offer, including delivery of new employment land to allow existing businesses to expand and to attract inward investment”. These statements are reflected in “Policy 17 Melksham Market Town” in the emerging Local Plan.

This planning application gives the retention and expansion for future jobs at Gompels and frees up their existing premises for the retention and expansion of jobs at Knorr Bremse, who are adjacent to the current Gompels site. The parish council note the letter of intent provided in the “Planning, Design & Access statement” dated April 2022, but would like to see more recent evidence of this and suggest a draft Heads of Terms for Knorr Bremse moving into the vacated existing Gompels building.

The proposed building is large. On balance, the parish council feel that the need for retention and expansion of jobs outweighs the point in CP34 & LP64 relating to “harm to the residential amenity” but request mitigation on the following aspects.

Residential amenity/landscape/historic environment

CP 34 “are consistent in scale with their location, do not adversely affect nearby buildings and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity”

LP64 “are appropriate in scale with their location, do not adversely affect the operation of nearby uses or unacceptably harm residential amenity

LP64: “do not represent unacceptable harm to landscape character or visual intrusion”

LP64: “do not represent unacceptable impacts on the historic environment”

1. Planting/Screening: the application talks of trees being mature in 15 years’ time; the parish council requests that mature, large specimens are planted to give more coverage, in a quicker time.
2. Design: the building is a functional warehouse, and thought is to be given to the design of the building to make it more architecturally interesting and appealing.
3. Colour scheme: the parish council request the use of graduated colour on the building to make it less “jarring” on the landscape; for example, the graduated colour on the Great Bear Distribution building for Cereal Partners on the A350, the other side of the Bowerhill industrial estate. Photo Credit².



² <https://libertyprops.com/project/great-bear-melksham>

4. Lighting: External building lighting to not be obtrusive, to be downlighting, and not to impact on the residents and wildlife.

Highways/Footpaths

LP64: “Lead to no unacceptable impacts on the local transport network”

Adopted Melksham NHP1 & Emerging NHP2: Policy 11 Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

The parish council note the site access is from a ghost lane, rather than a roundabout, as per several other applications for major development in the parish at present. The lane must be long enough to allow for waiting vehicles to turn right, and sufficient width to allow vehicles to pass on either side of waiting vehicles.

There is an emerging Local Plan site allocation at Bath Road, adjacent to (MOCS) Melksham Oak Community School (Policy 19) for 135 dwellings which will require a new access (roundabout?) onto the A365 at this stretch, as well as the long-held belief of the parish council that the entrance to MOCS is currently inadequate and should be a roundabout. The proposed route of the potential A350 Eastern Bypass is to the east of the planning application, which will have another roundabout. Wiltshire Council’s highway officers are asked to take all these access points into account and review a holistic approach to this stretch of road and not just look at this planning application’s site access in isolation.

It is noted that the A365 at the proposed site entrance is an HGV advisory route, with HGV traffic advised to use the A365 rather than travel through Seend and use the A361.

The parish council request an upgrade to the existing footpath surface and a safe pedestrian crossing for those employees walking to work from town.

Sustainable Design & Construction & EV Charging

CP 34: “meet sustainable development objectives”

Adopted Melksham NHP1 and emerging NHP2: Policy 1 Sustainable Design & Construction please refer to the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Adopted Melksham NHP1: Policy 4: Ultra-low emission vehicle charging – “proposals for new employment, leisure or retail developments are also encouraged to make provision for charging facilities for staff and/or other users.”

Emerging Melksham NHP2³ Policy 4: Ultra-low emission vehicle charging “Technology for charging low emission vehicles, such as electric vehicle

³ The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan has been reviewed and is currently at Examination (commenced 27th January 2025) see www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org

infrastructure, will be required for all development proposals in accordance with national or Wiltshire Council standards as relevant”.

Whilst the application incorporates solar panels, air source heat pumps etc and an excellent BREEAM rating at pre-assessment, which are welcomed, there is no mention of EV charging points, and the parish council would like to see these provided. This would not only lead to decarbonising road transport, but more use of electric vehicles would mean quieter traffic.

Care to be taken with the siting of the solar panels to ensure there is not a large reflective surface when the building is viewed from further away, from Seend/Seend Cleeve.

Other points raised at the public Planning Committee meeting

Members recognised and respected the many points raised by the residents of Bowerhill Lane and Bath Road and the wider Bowerhill and Seend areas who attended the meeting but felt that points raised were not material planning considerations. For example, concerns of loss of view, or fall in property values. Likewise, there were suggestions for Gompels to look at other sites, to swap their land with the parish council’s sports field, to work night shifts at their existing site, or to take less orders and not expand as a business, but the parish council were only able to consider the current planning application in front of them and material planning considerations.

The parish council also noted that the site is “SHELAA⁴ 3331 Land South of Bath Road (A365) West of Carnation Lane” and was considered in the Local Plan review (September 2023)⁵ as part of “Site 4: Land to the east of Bowerhill” and considered the joint 6th most sustainable site but not allocated in the Local Plan.

The remaining members of the public left the meeting at 8.45pm; with the meeting adjourned for 15 minutes for a break, commencing again at 9pm. Councillor Anne Sullivan, a non-Committee member remained for the rest of the meeting.

- b) [PL/2024/11665](#): **Land at Semington Road, Melksham, SN12 6DP**: (Rear of Townsend Farm Phase 2) Application for reserved matters pursuant to application ref: PL/2022/08155 for appearance, scale, layout and landscaping. Applicant: Living Space Housing.

Comments:

The parish council are disappointed that they can still see no sign of an equipped play area across both this plan, which the developer calls “Phase 2”, and the one for “Phase 1” 20/07334/OUT & PL/2023/00808. Both phases together are a

⁴ Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/1084/Monitoring-and-evidence>

⁵ [https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/11967/Planning-for-Melksham-](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/11967/Planning-for-Melksham-September2023/pdf/Planning_for_Melksham_September2023.pdf?m=1695727857577)

[September2023/pdf/Planning_for_Melksham_September2023.pdf?m=1695727857577](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/11967/Planning-for-Melksham-September2023/pdf/Planning_for_Melksham_September2023.pdf?m=1695727857577)

development of 103no. 100%affordable dwellings, with no LEAP (Local Area of Equipped Play). The parish council have requested a play area, not just a LAP (Local Area of Play), for all the iterations of the plans for both phases, and at appeal; and were reassured by more recent pre-app meetings with Living Space that there would be one included.

The parish council acknowledge the pedestrian access onto Berryfield Lane from the south west corner of the site, to give access to the parish council's two allotment sites on Berryfield Lane, and access to the Right of Way network to the river and canal.

The parish council reiterate their previous requests to ensure that pedestrians cannot access the A350 from the north of the site, as a dangerous point to cross the busy A-road from this point. They requested at outline application that the northern boundary be made impenetrable by increased vegetation and/or other boundary treatment. The temporary, not agreed, site access (installed gate) that has been used from the north west corner of the site must be closed off to pedestrian and vehicular traffic and made impenetrable.

The residents of Townsend Farm, Semington Road, Berryfield Park and Berryfield Lane have all been impacted by the construction traffic for the Phase 1 part of the development, and the parish council insist that the CEMP (Construction and Environmental Management Plan) Version 7 be reviewed and reflected for this second phase. Continued planning enforcement was requested from the start on site at the beginning of August until early 2025 and it's imperative that this is watertight and enforceable from the onset of the build for Phase 2.

Adherence to Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 1, and the emerging Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 policies (at Examination commencing 27th January 2025) and evidence documents such as Melksham Design Guide and type and tenure mix in the Housing Needs Assessment (Policy 6: Housing in defined settlements). See www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org

The parish council request the following:

Circular pedestrian routes around the site.

The Parish Council seek the provision of play equipment above that required by the West Wiltshire District Council saved Policy in the Core Strategy and wish to enter into discussions being the nominated party for any proposed LEAPs (Local Equipped Area of Play) and seek the following:

- 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 joins 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 area.
- 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.

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.

Speed limit within the site is 20mph and self-enforcing.

Proposed trees are not planted on boundaries of new/existing housing, but further into public open spaces.

The road layout is such that there are no dead ends in order that residents and refuse lorries do not need to reverse out of roads.

There is visible delineation between pavement and roads, so they are easily identifiable.

The provision of bird, bat and bee bricks, reptile refugia and hibernacula within the development, in order to increase biodiversity.

Refer to NHP Policy 1: Sustainable design and construction

Ground source heat pumps to be included in proposals.

To include capacity for hydrogen heating in the future within proposals.

Provision of solar panels and storage batteries for every house or group of houses/block of flats.

- c) [PL/2025/00086](#): **14 Wellington Drive, Bowerhill, Melksham, SN12 6QW**: First floor extension above existing garage and replacement pitched roof porch canopy.
Applicant: Mr & Mrs Brand.

Councillor John Glover abstained from voting on this application.

Comments: No objections.

- d) [PL/2025/00348](#): **289, Sandridge Common, Melksham, SN12 7QS**: Proposed Replacement Rear Single Storey Extension. Applicant: Mr Christopher John.

Comments: No objections.

- e) [PL/2025/00390](#): **Hedgerow located on each side of existing gate at Bath Road, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 8EG**: Section of temporary hedgerow removal is required 1m either side of an existing gate access, therefore 2m total, to facilitate a sewer replacement scheme being undertaken by Wessex Water. The temporary removal is required to facilitate access for construction machinery to the working area, within the neighbouring fields. Upon completion of the scheme, the hedgerow will be replanted following STD836 standards; a copy of this has been submitted with the hedgerow removal application. Applicant: Wessex Water

Comments: No objections.

The Clerk reported that the following planning applications for hedgerow removal by Balfour Beatty were to access the high voltage utility towers for maintenance to be carried out. The applications include the reinstatement plans for the hedgerows to be replanted following completion of the maintenance. There was a fourth application, for the land to the south of the substation at Beanacre where the new battery storage is located, which had been missed off the agenda, and it will be added to the next Planning Committee meeting with an extension for comments arranged.

- f) [PL/2025/00876](#): **Removal of 4m of hedgerow off A3102, Sandridge Common, Melksham, SN12 7GT**: Partial removal of hedgerow required for widening tower access Applicant: Balfour Beatty

Comments: No objections.

- g) [PL/2025/00936](#): **Removal of 6m of hedgerow Land east of 207 Woodrow Road, Melksham, SN12 7RD** Partial hedgerow removal required to install a 16ft gate Applicant: Balfour Beatty

Comments: No objections.

- h) [PL/2025/00873](#): **Removal of 40m of hedgerow Land off A350 Beanacre, Melksham, SN12 7PY** Partial removal of hedgerow required for tower access and culvert installation for EPZ location Applicant: Balfour Beatty

Comments: No objections.

- i) **PL/2025/00624**: To note decision made on TPO (Tree Preservation Order) To fell T1 (storm damaged beech) of TPO 2024/00015 Land off Beanacre Road Melksham,

SN12 7PU – To allow the removal of any protected tree, which is dead or imminently dangerous, without the need to make a formal Tree Work Application.

Resolved: This was noted.

403/24 Amended Plans/Additional Information: The Council considered the following revised/amended plans/additional information and made the following comments:

- a) [PL/2024/05921](#): Land to the north west and south of West Hill Road, Whitley, SN12 8RB Change of use of land relating to one field north of West Hill Road and one field South of West Hill Road, from agricultural to equestrian, permission for existing stables and horse box and provision of barn for the storage of equestrian equipment. Applicant: Mrs J Almond. Amended plans and change to proposal description.

Comments:

The parish council welcome the change of the proposal from two shipping containers to a barn, with green coloured cladding.

404/24 Current planning applications: Standing item for issues/queries arising during period of applications awaiting decision.

- a) **Land south of Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, SN12 7QP** (Planning Application [PL/2024/07097](#)) Erection of up to 300 dwellings; land for community use or building, open space and dedicated play space and service infrastructure and associate works.

The Clerk reported that as land had been secured for a community facility to the east of Melksham on the Blackmore Farm planning application, that she had written to the planning officer for the Snarlton Farm application to clarify that the council request just a financial contribution for one large community facility and not land as well from this application. A request for s106 discussions to be held with the parish council before any Strategic or Western Area Planning Committee meeting was also made.

Members noted the recent correspondence from the applicant and Highways officer on the application.

- b) [PL/2024/10674](#): **Land off Woodrow Road, Woodrow Road, Melksham, SN12 7AY** Outline application with all matters reserved except for access for the development of up to 70 dwellings, open space, ecological enhancements, play space, associated infrastructure (including drainage structures and works to the public highway), access, parking, servicing and landscaping. Applicant: Waddeton Park Ltd

Members noted the new document for the application, the Landscape & Visual Statement.

- c) [PL/2024/10345](#): **Land north of the A3102, Melksham (New Road Farm)** The construction of 295 homes; public open space, including formal play space and allotments; sustainable drainage systems; and associated infrastructure; with 0.4ha of land safeguarded for a nursery. The principal point of access is to be provided from a new northern arm on the existing Eastern Way/A3102 roundabout junction, with a secondary access onto the A3102. Additional access points are proposed for pedestrians and cyclists. Applicant: Bloor Homes South West

Members noted the holding objection of Wiltshire Council's Drainage team, and the objection of the Environment Agency due to the flood zones of the site and the request for sequential testing; which was surprising that it had not been undertaken as part of the evidence underpinning the site's allocation in the draft Local Plan. There were highways concerns regarding the roundabout design too.

There was also an interesting document that reviewed a variety of sustainable design measures such as heat pumps, solar panels etc, and their suitability for this development.

The Clerk reported that as land had been secured for a community facility to the east of Melksham on the Blackmore Farm planning application, that she had written to the planning officer for the New Road Farm application to clarify that the council request just a financial contribution for one large community facility and not land as well from this application. A request for s106 discussions to be held with the parish council before any Strategic or Western Area Planning Committee meeting was also made.

Resolved: The parish council raise with the Highways Officer and with Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder as the Ward Member and Cabinet member for Highways, that the Highways Officer had raised concerns about the roundabout design off the A3102; with a 4th arm off the existing roundabout objected to and a request for a new roundabout. The parish council feel that the established roundabout works well, and an extension would work fine. Of more concern from a highways perspective was residents having to cross the A3102 next to the roundabout, to reach the footway on the other side of the road and the members feel that this needs further consideration by the Highways Officer.

- d) **Land off Corsham Road, Whitley, Melksham (Planning application [PL/2024/09725](#))** Outline planning application (with access, layout and landscaping to be approved) for up to 22 dwellings, new access off Corsham Road, public open space, drainage and associated works. **To note update on request for conditions by parish council.**

Members noted the comments on the application raised by residents on Corsham Road following the heavy rain at Storm Eowyn and their land having to be pumped to prevent surface water entering their property.

The item was held in closed session, with the members agreeing that Councillor Anne Sullivan could stay in room when this confidential item was discussed.

Resolved: The parish council withdraw their request for a “Call In” for Committee decision on this application if the conditions requested by the parish council are agreed and included in the decision notice.

- e) **52e Chapel Lane, Beanacre (Planning Application [PL/2023/05883](#))** Erection of three dwellings, with access, parking and associated works including landscaping.

Members noted the strength of concerns recently raised by the drainage team on this application and commended them on their thorough examination of this aspect of the planning application.

- 405/24** To note update **from Lime Down Solar** project and its connection to the national grid at Melksham (Beanacre) substation and the commencement of the latest round of public consultation commencing Weds 29th January

<https://www.limedownsolar.co.uk/>

Councillor Peter Richardson reported on his first review of the documentation, which was some 13,500 pages long.

The Clerk explained that the developers were happy to meet with the parish council, as previously suggested, and this would be on Wednesday 26th February at 11am for an hour. It was noted that the parish council could consider the consultation in more detail at their next meeting on Monday 24th February, raise queries when they met a couple of days later, and at the public consultation event at Shaw School later on the 26th Feb, and then consider their response to the consultation at their next planning meeting on Monday 17th March before the deadline on Weds 19th March.

- 406/24** **Planning Enforcement:** To note any new planning enforcement queries raised and updates on previous enforcement queries.

- a) **Land West of Semington Road** (Rear of Townsend Farm Phase 1)
(PL/2023/00808)

Members noted that the CEMP v7 (Construction & Environmental Management Plan) had now finally be approved. The Clerk had sent photos of the mud on the road to the developers and Planning Enforcement and highways officers as there was still no evidence of wheel wash and road sweeping in operation; this was now depositing mud on the busy A350 roundabout.

Resolved: The parish council to raise this issue with Planning Enforcement, the Cabinet Member for Highways, and the Melksham News.

- b) **Land East of Semington Road** (Buckley Gardens).

Members noted that there had been further complaints of work starting on site before permitted hours which had been raised with Planning Enforcement with residents completing monitoring forms. It was thought that the cement

machinery was started up at 7.30/7.40am to be ready for the bricklayers to start on site at 8am. This was waking residents and before the permitted 8am start time.

With the occupation of the first few houses, there had been lots of deliveries to the new residents trying to access them via Shails Lane and so a request for signage for the junction of Shails Lane and Semington Road to deter this had been made and the Clerk was following up with the stakeholders.

c) Westlands Lane.

Members noted the correspondence from statutory bodies and that lorries using the weight restricted bridge can be reported to the police, Wiltshire Council highways as well as Planning Enforcement. Residents were completing Monitoring Sheets and taking photos. Photographic evidence is essential for the Enforcement team to proceed with any legal action.

Resolved: The parish council to inform Network Rail of the potential damage to their Railway bridge asset.

407/24 Planning Policy:

a) Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan:

- i) To approve response to the Examiner, as a qualifying body, agreed by the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering group on Wednesday 29th January to comments raised during the Regulation 16 consultation, which closed on 22nd January.

Councillor David Pafford, as Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group informed that he had attended the Town Council meeting the previous evening, who had approved as one of the Qualifying Bodies.

The Planning Committee had delegated powers to approve the response as the Qualifying Bodies, following the Full Council meeting on 27th January 2025.

Resolved: The parish council approve the response to be sent to the Examiner, with the additional update on the former Library site allocation to follow tomorrow from the Wiltshire Council Project Manager.

- ii) To note Examination commenced on Monday 27th January, and information received from the Examiner related to the programme of Examination.

Members noted that the Examiner would be visiting the Neighbourhood Plan area the following week, unaccompanied, and would make a decision in due course as to whether a Hearing would be required. Depending on that decision, a report and queries would be expected at the end of March, with a pending Referendum date of Thursday 1st May.

The total cost of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan in the financial year 2024/25 was £29,070.96 to date, with a small amount of additional spend for responding to any questions from the Examiner and the response approved this evening. This was split with the Town Council 70% and the Parish Council 30%.

b) **Wiltshire Council Local Plan:**

To consider responses received following queries raised with Wiltshire Council on:

- i) how comments submitted to the Wiltshire Local Plan consultation were considered and whether there was any public documentation available detailing any changes to the plan as a result.

Resolved: To follow up this response asking for a couple of examples of how issues raised were considered and addressed.

- ii) the lack of Employment Land allocated in the Melksham area compared to the anecdotal evidence of local need

Members noted the response and were disappointed that whilst received, this correspondence had not been followed up by the Economic Development team at Wiltshire Council, nor had they been consulted on the Gompels warehouse application, whereas they had for the Octavian warehouse application before Christmas. This had been requested by the Clerk.

- c) **NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework):** To note the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) review on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes made in December 2024.

This was noted.

408/24 S106 Agreements and Developer meetings: (Standing Item)

- a) Updates on ongoing and new S106 Agreements

- i) Land at Blackmore Farm, Sandridge Common, Melksham, SN12 7QS
[PL/2023/11188](#): Demolition of agricultural buildings and development of up to 500 dwellings, up to 5,000 square metres of employment, land for a primary school, land for mixed use hub, open space. Applicant: Tor & Co for Gleesons
- To note officer report for the Strategic Planning Committee held on Thurs 23rd January and verbal report from attendees
 - To note Decision made to approve the application pending negotiations and agreement of the s106 agreement
 - To consider feedback from meeting with Gleesons 28th January and with Gleesons & Wiltshire Council on 29th January re s106 negotiations and approve way forward

Recommendation: The Planning Committee recommend to the Full Council to ratify the current s106 negotiations in play since the Strategic Committee meeting on 23rd January as meetings with the developers and Wiltshire Council's Planning Officer had been continuing over the last couple of weeks. The parish council representatives had agreed to an offer of 0.4Ha of community facility land (that can be 3 storey high) and proportionate funding contribution, rather than just 1Ha of land.

ii) Pathfinder Place:

It was noted that the trigger for the public open space to be transferred was 90% occupation that had passed, with the Clerk following this up.

iii) Buckley Gardens, Semington Road (PL/2022/02749: 144 dwellings)

No update.

iv) Land South of Western Way for 210 dwellings and 70 bed care home (PL/2022/08504) To note any updates and consider a way forward.

No update.

v) To note any S106 decisions made under delegated powers

Nothing to report but the Clerk was pleased to report a call from an officer drafting the s106 aspects for Blackmore Farm on the allotments, play areas and public open spaces. He advised that the parish council were on a list of just five parish/town councils to contact if there was a relevant application in their parish as they had expressed an interest in taking on assets. The Clerk was able to raise some of the issues experienced in the past and discussed ways to ensure that this did not happen again in the future.

b) Contact with developers:

None to report.

Meeting closed at 9.55 pm

Chairman, 17th February 2025