



Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2

2020 – 2038

Referendum Version



MELKSHAM
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN

Overview Information

This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP) Steering Group. It is the second edition Neighbourhood Plan which reviews and updates the first edition of the JMNP which was formally 'made' in July 2021.

Together with its associated documentation the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 is to be used for this intended purpose only.

The Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, submitted and examined against the December 2023 version of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Related information and the Plan evidence base can be found on the website: melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org

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

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Thanks and acknowledgements to:

All those who have contributed considerable time to shape the content of this plan, in particular Steering Group and Task Group members and Town and Parish staff members, as well as the local people featured in our talking head videos and quoted at the start of each chapter.

Many of the Plan photographs were provided by Linda De Santiz as well as by members of the Plan Steering Group. Front Cover Aerial Photo: Catherine Fallon Operations. Aerial of Sandridge Solar Farm: Foresight Group. Ruth Balnave and Phil McMullen for logo design.

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

Locality who administered grant funding and gave advice and support. AECOM who were the main providers of technical evidence

Neighbourhood Plan Consultants – [Place Studio](#), supported the Steering Group and the Town and Parish Councils throughout the entire process.

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Foreword



The first Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP) 2020 – 2026 was brought into force on 1st July 2021 when our community gave it the thumbs up, through a positive community referendum result. It was therefore adopted as part of the Wiltshire Development Plan to be used to guide and decide planning applications.

Ongoing and new issues like providing affordable homes in the right places, tackling climate change and helping local businesses recover from the impact of COVID and deal with the Cost of Living crisis make it imperative that our Neighbourhood Plan evolves to continue to provide a strong local planning voice, alongside Wiltshire's emerging new Local Plan that will set out where new homes and jobs will be provided looking ahead to 2038.

To achieve this Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish Councils and the Steering Group jointly launched the review of the Neighbourhood Plan to look ahead to 2038. The result is this second edition of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP2). It has been updated and added to in order to make sure it remains up-to-date, forward looking and strong.

This is a bold Plan that goes beyond minimum requirements, with the aim of getting the best possible outcomes from development for our communities as well as providing a legacy for future generations from a plan-led regeneration of brownfield sites.

It tackles the difficult issue of housing shortage and need, by taking a positive and proactive approach to managing future development.

It prioritises the regeneration of both the Cooper Tires and the Old Library site to support the delivery of homes, jobs and town centre vitality. Both of these projects attracted strong community support at the consultation stage.

At Shaw and Whitley, the strategy protects the separate identities of each village and enables the delivery of much needed smaller and more affordable homes.

The Plan even seeks to ensure that development granted at appeal, such as land South of Western Way, delivers on local priorities.

From those members of our community who are part of our Steering Group, to the people who joined our working groups, to those who have responded to our consultations; it's local people who have helped to shape this update.

Our thanks to the many of you who have taken the time, in one way or another, to contribute to this Plan, to make sure it stays bang up-to-date and gives us the strongest possible say in local planning decisions.

David Pafford

Chair of Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Melksham Without Parish Councillor

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1 Introduction



1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

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

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

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

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

1.1.4 Melksham, local villages and our rural parish is a great place to live. It has a good range of housing choice, a strong economy, good transport connections, an historic town centre, green spaces, the new Campus, beautiful countryside and the River

Avon. Consequently, it is a focus of much housing development. It is therefore vital that our Neighbourhood Plan maximises its powers to plan and manage growth in the context of the Wiltshire Local Plan Review (LPR) which will replace the Wiltshire Core Strategy, with a Local Plan looking ahead to 2038¹.

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

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

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

1. [Wiltshire's Local Plan, the Wiltshire Core Strategy, was adopted in 2015, and therefore must be reviewed.](#)

1.2 Reviewing the JMNP

1.2.1 There is no set time period within which Neighbourhood Plans must be reviewed, but it is imperative that the JMNP is kept up to date and strong beyond the end date of 2026.

1.2.3 The first edition of the JMNP was adopted (or 'made' to use the planning term) in 2021. Due to the early stages of the Local Plan Review at the time, the decision was taken that site allocations for the town should be considered in a review of JMNP1 once the Local Plan Review had progressed further and set out housing requirements. In the winter of 2024, the draft Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. It sets out a strategy where the majority of new homes and jobs will be provided at Melksham, and included housing requirements for the whole Neighbourhood Plan area.

1.2.4 Though the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan has yet to go through the crucial final stage of examination at the point of publication of this Plan, it sets the context for looking ahead to 2038 and development in and around Melksham. This reviewed and updated JMNP2 enables our community to continue a 'Plan Led' (rather than developer-led) approach to development, and links into the Local Plan review process and the emerging policies of the draft Local Plan. Therefore the Steering Group have continued to work closely with Wiltshire Council in order that the JMNP can look ahead towards 2038 and stay up-to-date.

1.2.5 Undertaking the review:

- Gives our community a much stronger and clearer say in what development goes where.
- Saves and updates the first Plan's adopted policies. It will add stronger evidence so that our plan can continue to protect our economy, environment and community life and deliver on its long term aims. No policy areas have been removed.
- Adds new policies to protect our green spaces and valued countryside that have become high priorities since the first Plan.
- Refreshes and strengthens how the Neighbourhood Plan informs and shapes development and conservation in the town, villages and countryside of the Plan Area.



Jargon Alert!

Though we have tried to make this a reader friendly document, planning can be full of unavoidable jargon, so a glossary of key terms is included at the end of the Plan (click for [page 116](#)).

1.3 What changes has JMNP2 Introduced?

1.3.1 Updated Existing Policies:

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

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

- New Policy 7: Allocation of various sites for housing
- New Policy 16: Local Green Spaces - a designation to protect valued green spaces from development.
- New Policy 19: Separation of Settlements – to protect the countryside that acts to separate our town and villages.

1.3.3 Updated Priority Statements;

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

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



What is Sustainable Development?

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

(National Planning Policy Framework)

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

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

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

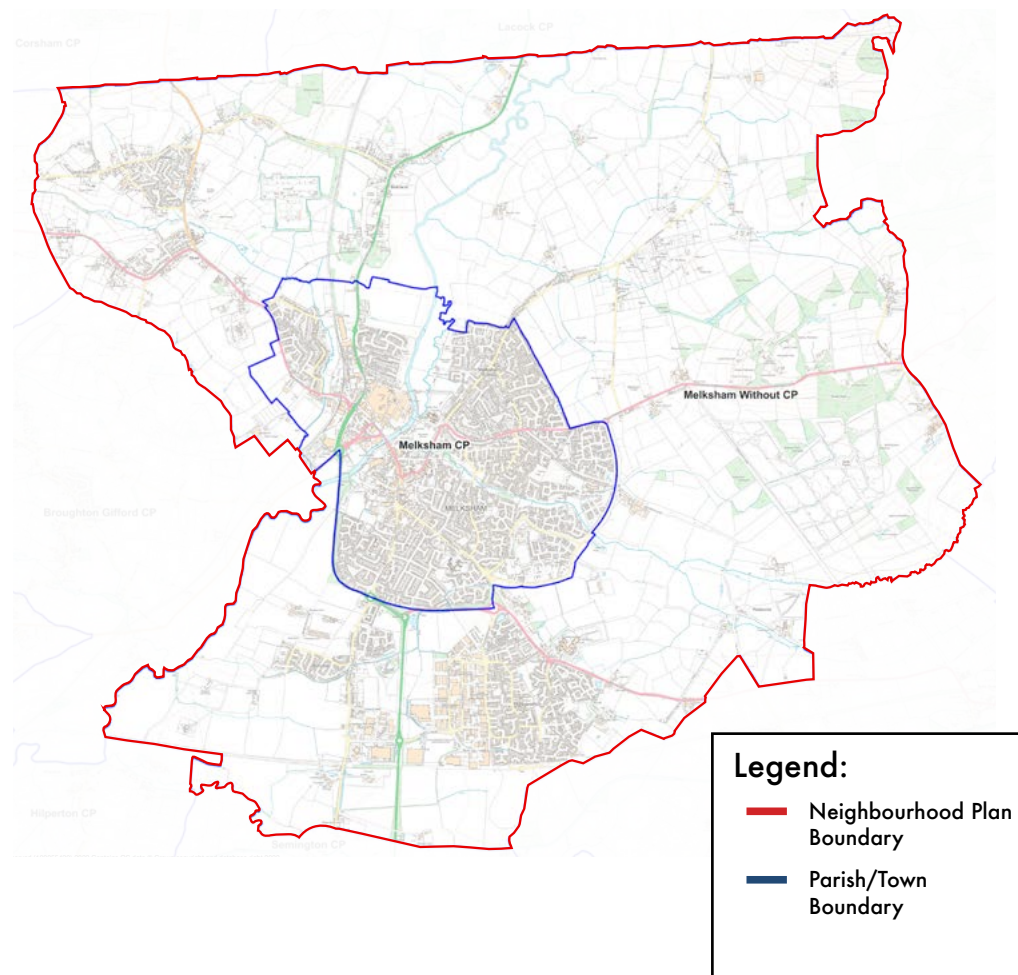
1.4.3 The Plan covers the period 2020 – 2038.

1.5 Who has prepared the JMNP2?

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

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

Figure 1: Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Area



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1.6 How does the JMNP represent the community's views?

1.6.1 The Steering Group of local representatives worked hard to make sure this second edition of the JMNP continues to reflect the hopes, and addresses the concerns, of the community of the town and the rural area for the future development of our area.

1.6.2 As with the first Plan, the review and drafting of the JMNP2 has been informed by the community as well as stakeholders such as Wiltshire Council. How this has been undertaken is detailed in the Consultation Statement which can be found on the Plan website (www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org).

1.6.3 Following a positive local referendum community vote for JMNP, it will continue to be actively used and monitored by the Parish and Town Council, as community representatives, to respond to planning applications. It will also be used by applicants and importantly by Wiltshire Council (and at times by planning inspectors when deciding on appeals) in reaching planning decisions.

1.7 Navigating the Plan

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

1.7.2 Planning policies form the main focus of this Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Setting the Agenda to 2038



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

2.1.1 Consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan as well as the current Wiltshire Core Strategy highlighted the following key issues faced by town and rural areas:

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

2.1.2 These issues could not be addressed successfully through independent plans. At its simplest, the whole Neighbourhood Plan area operates as a classic market town and catchment. This interdependence is further highlighted by the likelihood of future housing growth, much of which is likely to take place in Melksham

Without. A single, joint Plan increases the value for the communities of both town and parish.

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

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

2.2 Neighbourhood Plan Review: Updating key issues and Evidence

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

2.2.2 Throughout the spring and summer of 2022, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group undertook a series of community and stakeholder communication and consultations to build community input into the priority issues that the updated second edition of the JMNP should address. This enabled areas

of new priority to be raised and focused on updating and adding evidence in the key local issues of:

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

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

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

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



Maps and Evidence Base Reports

All maps and evidence base reports referenced in the Plan are also available on melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org as individual files

2.3 Key facts about the Neighbourhood Plan area

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

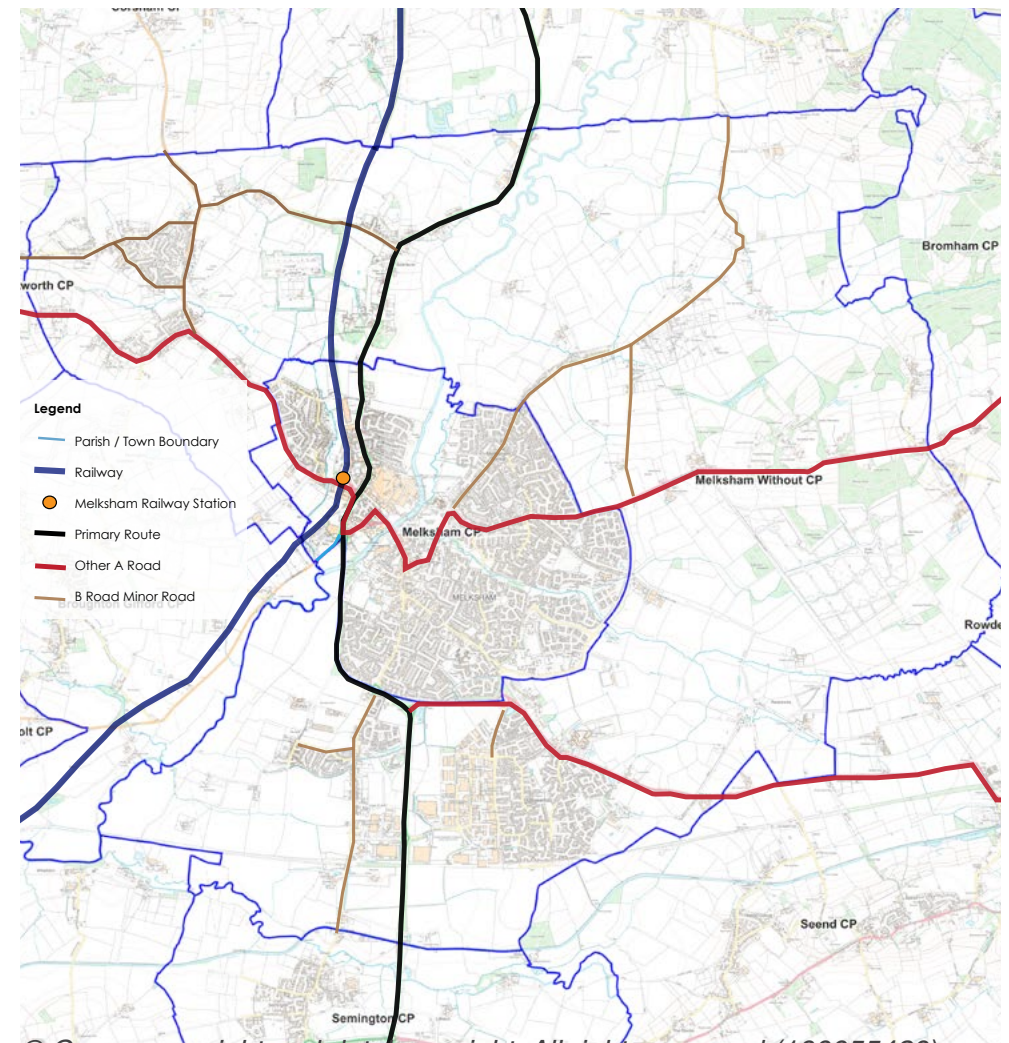
- The total resident population of the Neighbourhood Plan area (Melksham Town and Melksham Without) in 2021 was estimated to be 25,300, an increase of 15.4% since 2011 when the population was 21,907².
- There are lower than national averages of people between the ages of 15-44. The predominant age band was '50 to 54' closely followed by '55-60' which is a little above the national average and our population is ageing³.
- A key local employer (Cooper Tires) closed its factory in December 2023.
- We have a well qualified resident work force. There is a strong specialisation in the Manufacturing sector as its concentration of employment in that sector is considerably higher than the national average.⁴
- We have a railway station, but public transport generally is limited in the area, and the area around the station is in need of investment and improvement.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is strategically located between Chippenham and Trowbridge and on the A350 primary route corridor between the M4 and Poole. There is also a proposal for a bypass which will change the demand for services and working practices.

2. [Wiltshire Intelligence Data Sets. Accessed July 2023](#)

3. <https://lichfields.uk/content/insights/solutions-to-an-age-old-problem>

4. [Wiltshire Council Employment Land Review Update 2023](#)

Figure 2: Rail and Key Roads Routes



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2.4 The wider context

2.4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework⁵ (NPPF) together with Planning Guidance covers most forms of development and sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social priorities for planning in England. Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to and be in general conformity with principles and policies in the NPPF. The NPPF is regularly updated, most recently on 12 December 2024. This Plan was submitted before this date, and therefore refers to the NPPF dated December 2023.

2.4.2 Neighbourhood Plans are also required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. In Wiltshire, our current Local Plan is the [Wiltshire Core Strategy](#) (WCS), adopted in 2015. This incorporates Saved policies from former District Local Plans, and also includes the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan. The Local Plan, together with Neighbourhood Plans, forms the Development Plan for Wiltshire.

2.4.3 The Government requires every Local Plan to be reviewed at least once every five years. The Steering Group have held regular meetings with Wiltshire Council to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies are updated within the changing context of the Local Plan Review. Policies in this second edition of the JMNP however reference the adopted policies of the development plan (Wiltshire Core Strategy) whilst taking into account the emerging Local Plan which will provide necessary and important updates to the Development Plan for Wiltshire, but it is important to note that it has not yet been through the process of independent examination.

2.4.4 The qualifying bodies acknowledge that the adoption of the Wiltshire Local Plan will alter the development plan in the county. In this context the need or otherwise for a further partial review of the Plan will be assessed within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan. The qualifying bodies already have robust measures in place to monitor the effectiveness of the neighbourhood plan. This process will continue throughout the Plan period. Specific attention will be given to the delivery of the five allocated sites. Melksham Town Council will continue to work with potential developers to secure the regeneration of the Coopers Tires site (Policy 7.1).

2.5 Emerging Local Plan Housing Requirements and Site Allocations

2.5.1 Wiltshire Council's emerging Local Plan sets out how many homes are required looking ahead to 2038. Draft housing site allocations are included in the emerging Local Plan to the north-east and south-east of Melksham. These allocations meet the majority of the housing requirements (and employment requirements) for Melksham. No allocations are made at Shaw or Whitley in the emerging Local Plan.

2.5.2 For the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning, Wiltshire Council are also required to provide housing requirements that reflect the overall strategy for pattern and scale of development.

5. [National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023 version](#)

At Melksham the emerging Local Plan suggests a requirement of around 200 dwellings. In planning terms, the villages of Shaw and Whitley are considered together as a 'large village' which is subject to a separate housing requirement of around 70. Together the emerging overall housing requirement figure for the JMNP plan area is therefore approximately 270⁶.

2.6 The approach to the Neighbourhood Plan

2.6.1 Working in partnership with Wiltshire Council, and taking into account the emerging Local Plan has been essential in the formulation of the updated JMNP2.

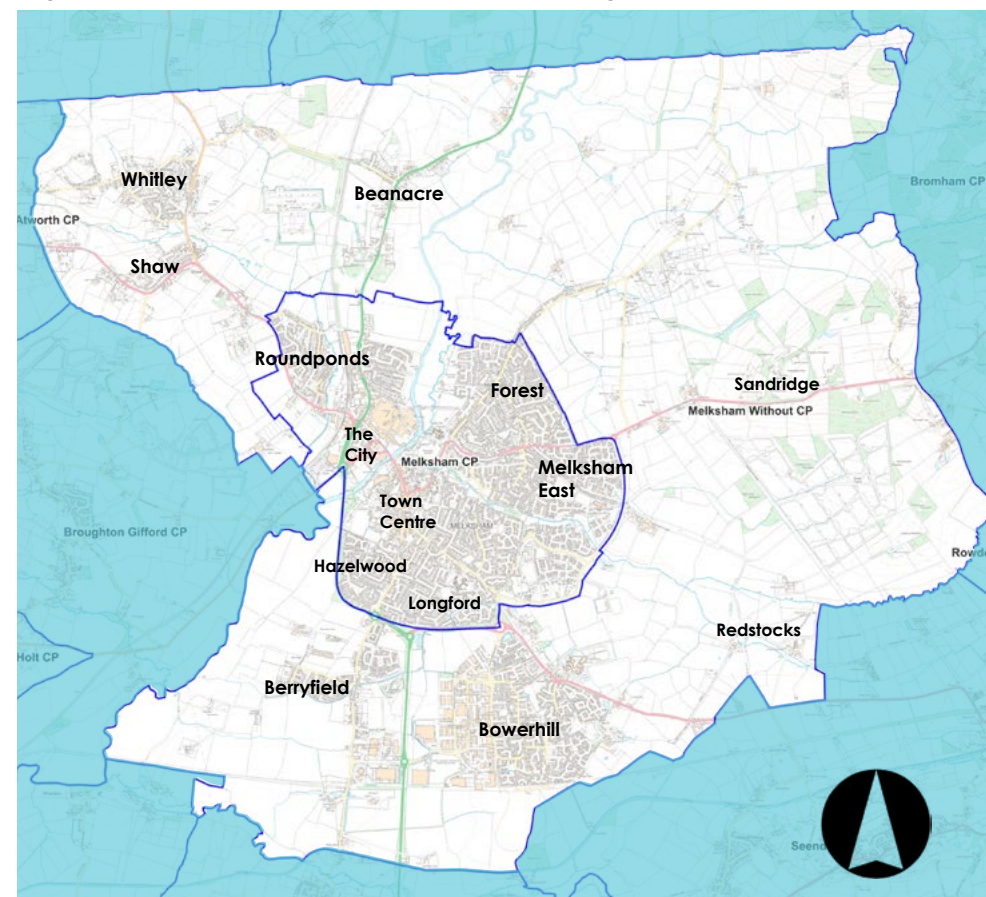
2.6.2 Although housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas are not binding, neighbourhood planning bodies are encouraged by the government to plan to meet their housing requirement, and where possible to exceed it as *"a sustainable choice of sites to accommodate housing will provide flexibility if circumstances change, and allows plans to remain up to date over a longer time scale"*⁷. The Steering Group therefore felt it important to review potential development sites in the Plan area with a particular focus on what community benefit development could offer. Landowners submitted potential land for development, and more than 100 sites have been subject to initial independent assessments, some emerging as potentially suitable and some as unsuitable (see the Housing Evidence Base Report available on the Neighbourhood Plan website). All this information has given us an informed evidence base from which to make an informed and proactive approach to development in our Neighbourhood Plan area.

6. [Wiltshire Local Plan. Planning for Melksham. September 2023](#)

7. [Planning Practice Guidance: Neighbourhood Planning. Latest update March 2020 Paras 103 - 104](#)

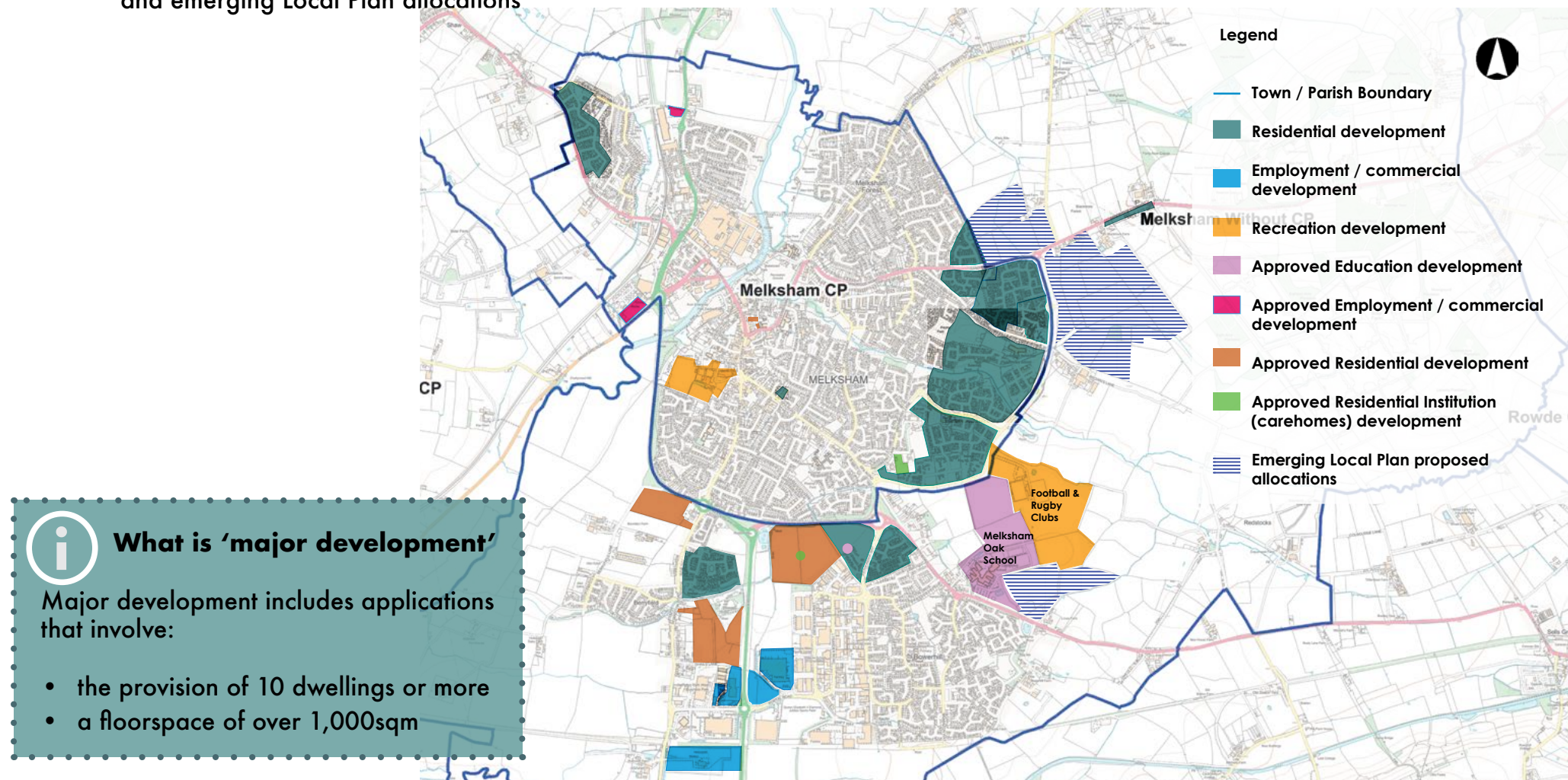
2.6.3 The Neighbourhood Plan is aiming to meet many of the required housing numbers through brownfield allocation. For more detail on the approach to housing allocation, [turn to page 46](#).

Figure 3: Plan Area Settlements and Neighbourhoods



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Figure 4: Major planning permissions granted during the current Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2015) period (at January 2025) and emerging Local Plan allocations



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2.7 Melksham Town Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Church Walk, Melksham



Blenheim Park Bowerhill



War Memorial



Christ Church Shaw



Methodist Church Whitley



Berryfield



St Barnabas Church, Beanacre



Melksham Town Hall

2.8 Melksham Without Introduction

2.8.1 Melksham Without Parish was created under the Local Government Act of 1894, which divided the ancient parish of Melksham into Melksham Within (the town or urban district council area) and the rural Melksham Without. Parts of Melksham Without, adjacent to the town, were subsequently transferred to Melksham Within in 1895, 1914 and 1934, in the 1960s, 1991, 2017 and 2021.

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

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

2.8.4 Medieval Shaw was a small community centred on its manor house and the chapel here seems to have had more to do with the barony of Castle Combe than local needs. The settlement remained small and rural, but by the 17th century there were a reasonable number of houses. The population grew during the 19th century and a church and school were provided.

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

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

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

2.9 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

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

2.9.2 Recent reports⁸ illustrate how urgent it is that action is taken. Extreme weather events have been seen around the world, and now there is incontrovertible evidence that human activity has raised and continues to raise the risk of extreme weather.

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.8 The Parish Council also encourage, where appropriate, the planting of trees to combat climate change and help reduce CO₂ in the atmosphere, by signing up to the Tree Charter (www.treecharter.uk). They have also worked with volunteers to plant hundreds of trees supplied by the Woodland Trust. The community in Shaw and Whitley have planted their own trees too. The Town Council have regularly organised community tree planting schemes where residents of Melksham can obtain free trees for planting in their gardens. In November 2023 more tree planting took place.

8. [*IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels*](#)

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

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

- Promoting green, environmentally sustainable building standards – **Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction**
- Supporting the installation of electric (or other ultra-low emission) vehicle charging points – **Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles**
- Supporting a vibrant town centre so that people can shop locally – **Policy 9: Town Centre**
- Supporting local employment opportunities to reduce the need for out-commuting – **Policy 10 Employment Sites**

- Giving proper consideration to routes for buses, cyclists, footpaths and green/blue infrastructure in our housing developments – **Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**
- Protecting or promoting a network of biodiverse green spaces and green corridors, conserving established trees and hedgerows – **Policy 12: Green and Blue Infrastructure** and **Policy 16: Trees and Hedgerows. This also links into the issue of flood risk in our area and Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management** which highlights the importance of a holistically planned Green and Blue Infrastructure in conjunction with the flood risk assessment / drainage strategy in order to manage surface water runoff across a site.



3 The Vision and Objectives



3.1 The Vision

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

Great places for shopping, working and getting around through:

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

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

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

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

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



Riverside Walk

4 Planning Policies

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

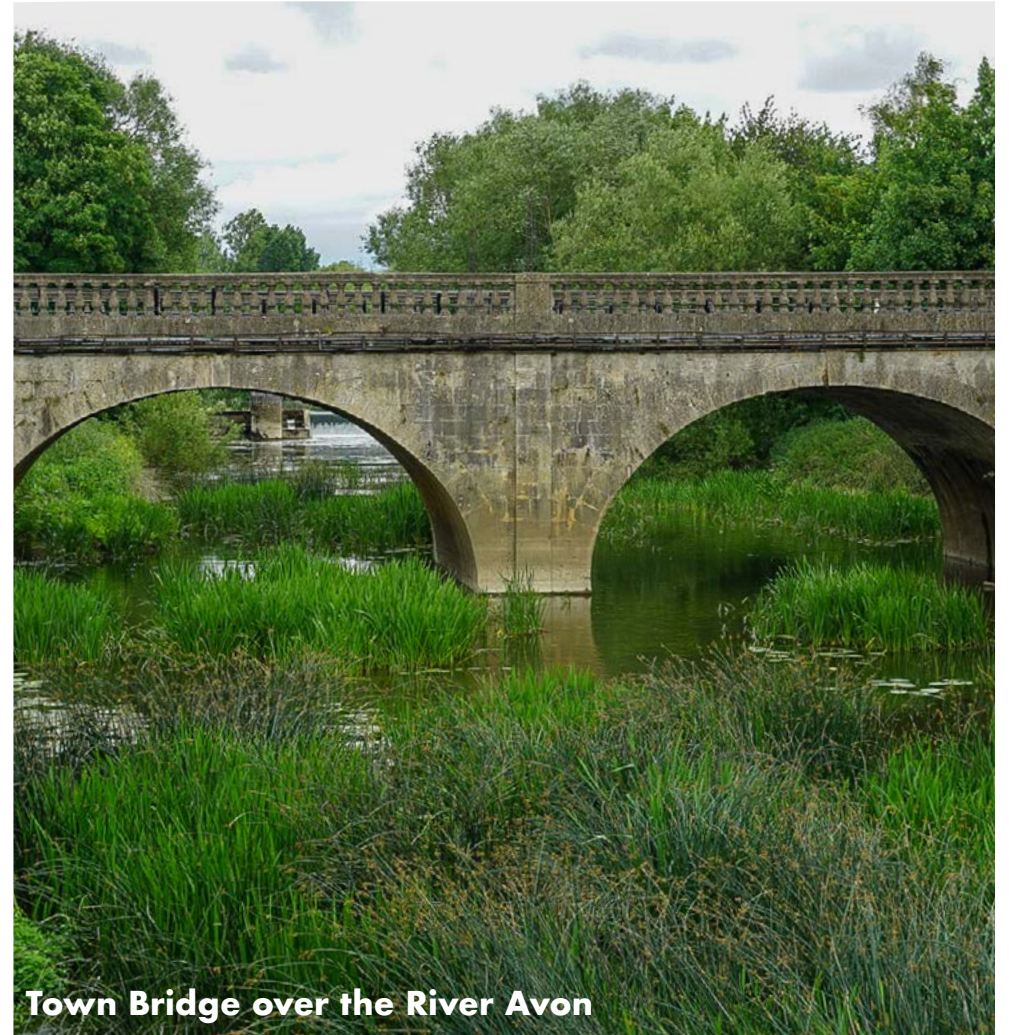
For each policy there are one or more objectives, then the policy itself in coloured boxes, and then the key reasons behind the policy.



What is a Planning Policy?

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

[\(Planning Practice Guidance: Neighbourhood Planning. Latest update March 2020\)](#)



Town Bridge over the River Avon

4.1 Index of Policies

Sustainable development and climate change

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

Housing and infrastructure needs

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

Shopping, working and getting around

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

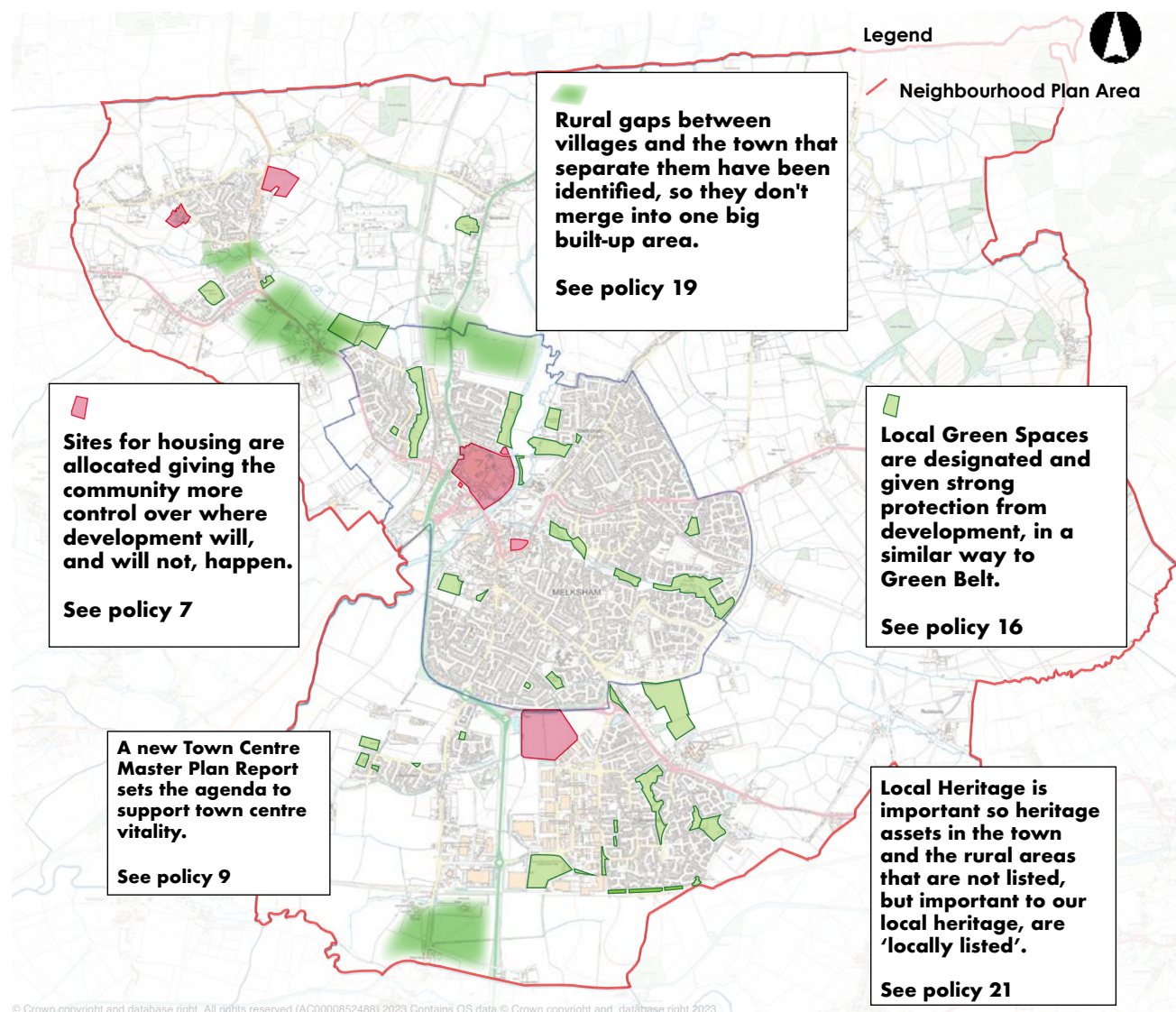
Community well-being and nature

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

Built and natural environment

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

Figure 5: Strategy Overview



Sustainable Development and Climate Change



"The Neighbourhood Plan should encourage renewable energy production in ways that will deliver community benefits"

Policies in this section:

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

Sustainable Design and Construction

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

Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate how they have mitigated and been designed to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This includes:

- a. the submission of a Sustainable Energy Strategy to demonstrate how carbon emissions are minimised, with the target of zero carbon in operation (regulated and unregulated energy);
- b. embedding the Energy Hierarchy within the design of buildings by prioritising fabric first, orientation, design, and landscaping, to minimise energy demand for heating, lighting, and cooling, as well as maximising renewable energy generation. Proposals should respond positively to opportunities to improve space heating and energy consumption by considering a range of low-carbon and renewable technologies;
- c. demonstrating good connections to existing services and facilities, and/or a mix of uses that minimises the need to travel by private vehicle;
- d. using carbon sequestration and other sustainable approaches such as shade; and
- e. the retention of existing buildings where practicable, and the incorporation of associated retrofitting measures to improve the energy performance of existing buildings.

The reason for the policy

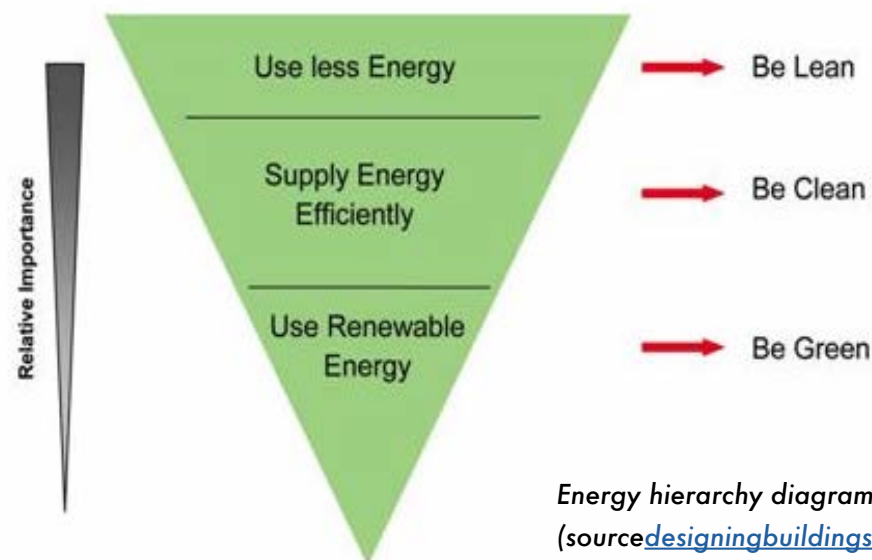
4.2.1 The challenge of climate change can be viewed in terms of both mitigating and adapting. Mitigation is required to reduce the amount of carbon released. Adaptation is also required and associated with becoming more resilient against the impacts of climate change, for example making sure that buildings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

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

4.2.3 Whilst the policy is ambitious, it has been written to 'support' development that complies and will need to be applied flexibly to decisions on planning applications where the applicant can demonstrate that meeting the higher standards is not technically feasible. This reflects the requirements of the Written Ministerial Statement on Local Energy Efficiency Standards⁹ that sets out that

policies should generally not apply energy efficiency standards that go beyond current or planned building regulations.

4.2.4 The energy hierarchy is a core principle for this policy which means improving building materials, energy efficiency and minimising space heating requirements, before installing renewable energy and then offsetting residual energy if required. It continues to acknowledge the importance of a holistic approach to meeting the urgent aim of lowering carbon emissions. It is recognised that a range of factors in the built environment needs to be considered, including how we design and lay out places that incorporate nature and making it easier to get around without the car.



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

9. [Planning - Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update 13th December 2023](#)

4.2.5 [The Net-Zero Toolkit](#)¹⁰ has been created to make Net Zero carbon new build and retrofit more accessible. It has been created for building professionals (developers, contractors, architects and engineers) and is also relevant to self-builders, planning officers and other housing professionals. The guide recommends operational targets for new homes and retrofitting existing homes, which are consistent with the [LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide](#). It outlines that energy use targets for space heating, and total energy consumption are more transparent and robust than carbon reduction targets and are the best way to ensure zero carbon is delivered in practice.

4.2.6 In their report, '[UK Housing: Fit for the Future?](#)' the [Committee on Climate Change \(CCC\)](#) warns: "We will not meet our targets for emissions reduction without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock. Energy use in homes accounts for about 14% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions need to fall by at least 24% by 2030 from 1990 levels, but are currently off track... The technology exists to deliver homes that are low-carbon, energy efficient and climate-resilient... The costs are not prohibitive, and getting design right from the outset is vastly cheaper and more feasible than having to retrofit later." The Net Zero Toolkit indicates that a net zero home can be delivered for a cost increase of 2-6% over Part L Building Regulations 2021.

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

4.2.8 This policy also relates to existing buildings which may be retrofitted to improve energy efficiency. For heritage assets, established best practice in the form of technical guidance including climate change adaptation, retrofit and energy efficiency advice is offered by Historic England¹¹.

10. Levitt Bernstein, Elementa, Passivhaus Trust and Etude commissioned by West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils, funded by the LGA Housing Advisers Programme 2021

11. [Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency Advice Note 18 from Historic England was published in July 2024](#)



Towards Net Zero

The government set a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels. This is known as the 'net zero target'.

Linked to this, there has been an increase in Local and Neighbourhood Plans incorporating ambitious and pioneering policies which introduce operational energy targets for new buildings to demonstrate net zero carbon development. Research for this policy has included review of Local Planning Authority approaches, notably the [Cornwall Council Climate Emergency DPD](#) and the accompanying viability assessment, which set out the need for some flexibility in policy requirements for energy use targets as identified in the Net Zero Toolkit.

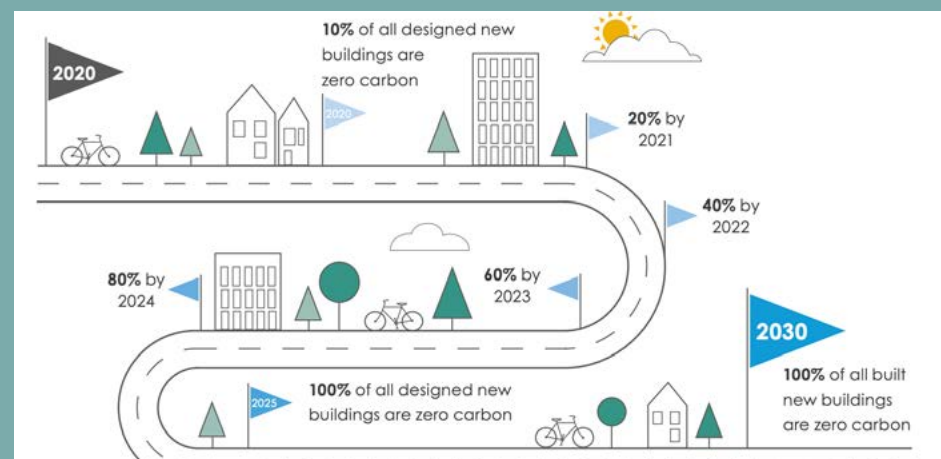
Wiltshire Council also include a policy on Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy (policy 85) in the emerging Local Plan, which also proposes the use of operational targets. The policy sets out an expectation that new dwellings will demonstrate the following operational standards:

- space heating demand less than 30kWh/m²/annum;
- total energy use less than 40kWh/m²/annum;
- on site renewable energy generation to match total energy use

Right: Getting to Zero diagram from the Leti Climate Emergency Design Guide

The use of the following standards may help to demonstrate that buildings are built to high environmental standards:

- The [Home Quality Mark](#) (HQM) helps house builders to demonstrate the high quality of their homes. It gives householders the confidence that the new homes are well designed and built, and cost effective to run.
- [BREEAM](#) (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is a sustainability assessment method that is used to masterplan projects, infrastructure and buildings.
- Other standards include [Passivhaus](#) or [AECB Building Standard](#). Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating and cooling.



Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

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

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

Policy 2: Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure

1. Proposals for renewable energy, low carbon energy generation projects/developments, and associated infrastructure, including Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

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

e. the proposal, when taking into consideration other renewable and low carbon energy developments and associated infrastructure in the area, will not result in an unacceptable cumulative impact.

2. Schemes which result in direct benefits to the local community such as energy supplied directly, or financial benefits, will be supported. Proposals for community energy generation projects (with full or partial ownership and/or control by a local community) will be strongly supported. In addition, schemes where the energy produced can be used on or near the generation site or where energy storage is incorporated will be supported. In both cases, proposals should comply with the criteria in the first part of this policy.

The reason for the policy

4.3.1 Renewables, such as wind and solar power, are important ways to achieve the legally binding net zero target with the production of decarbonised electricity. Associated infrastructure to distribute and store renewable energy is necessary to respond to fluctuations in supply and demand¹². The Climate Change Committee points out that “new storage systems, beyond simply the use of batteries” is needed.

4.3.2 As part of moving towards the net zero target in a changing climate, this Plan supports generation of zero or low carbon energy, particularly where it enables communities to take a more active role in, and get direct benefit from, the production of renewable and low carbon local energy. However, it is vital that views of our communities and impacts on our landscape, biodiversity and heritage are taken into account when considering any proposals for renewable, or low carbon energy generation and associated infrastructure. Not just for any individual proposal, but the cumulative impact must also be taken into account.

4.3.3 The policy refers to protection of local amenity and safety. This includes issues such as noise from battery energy storage systems, and glare/glint from solar panels, which can be a problem experienced locally. Wherever practicable, proposals that harness existing buildings and structures and/or that are located on brownfield land, should be selected as a preference to the use of greenfield land for renewable energy generation or associated infrastructure.

Community Energy generation in Wiltshire

Nadder Community Energy Ltd raises money in their local area by selling shares which are paid back over a 20 year period, plus interest; this money is used for local solar panels or other renewable energy systems. In a single year they generated approximately 472,458 kw electricity and raised over £90,000 for the community (www.nadderce.org.uk)



Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

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

The government’s planning practice guidance notes that BESSs are a way “to use energy more flexibly and de-carbonise our energy system cost-effectively”¹³

12. [Research Briefing Battery energy storage systems April 2024](#)

13. [Planning Practice Guidance, Renewable and low carbon energy, last updated August 2023, para 32](#)

Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

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

Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management

Natural flood management works to conserve and enhance the ecological flood storage value of the water environment, including watercourse corridors and catchments, will be supported. Development proposals in locations with known flooding issues should include appropriate mitigation and construction methods, and, where appropriate, contributions towards wider catchment projects.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate how flood risk is mitigated. This approach should include measures to reduce the amount of rainwater run-off and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems.

The reason for the policy

4.4.1 For the community, there are strong concerns over development in high flood risk areas, and the importance of protecting homes from flood damage. Flood risk must not be increased by new development.

4.4.2 One of the major impacts of a changing climate is an increased risk of flooding and this is a significant issue for parts of the north west and south east of Melksham. The UK Met Office predicts that in a business-as-usual scenario, Britain could experience a decrease in summer rainfall by up to 47%, and up to 35% more rain in winter by 2070. This flood risk is exacerbated by the many drainage streams from the north of Whitley that outfeed in the First Lane area. The UK's winter floods of 2013-14 severely affected parts of the Plan area. There were also two additional incidents of 1 in 150 year storms, in August 2012 and September 2014. Since 2014 there have been further flooding incidents, including in January 2023 and 2024. A local response to the issue of flooding is to recruit and train local residents as flood wardens for ongoing monitoring and immediate response.

4.4.3 Any development has the potential to worsen surface water flooding. Paragraph 167 of the NPPF sets out that new development should make use of opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, where appropriate, through the use of

natural flood management techniques. Where required, flood risk and ground water assessments should be undertaken and surface water drainage strategy must be developed and delivered. The drainage strategy must ensure that flood risk is addressed to 1 in 100-year storm event plus climate change in line with Environment Agency Guidance. This is particularly relevant to the South Brook catchment area which has been identified as a priority flood risk area due to surface water flooding.

4.4.4 This is an important issue recognised at national level. The [National Design Guide](#), includes guidance on integrated water management that enhances the character of a place and makes it more resilient.

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

4.4.6 The [Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes](#) document which has been prepared as part of this updated Plan, includes a section which addresses water management (DC03.11), which sets out the importance of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and includes a number of ‘overarching principles’ that should be

applied in development to mitigate against the important issue of flood risk – right across our communities and especially in the areas with known surface water flooding issues. An important point to note is that Green and Blue Infrastructure should be holistically planned in conjunction with the flood risk assessment / drainage strategy in order to manage surface water runoff and implement high-quality Blue/Green SuDS solutions on site, and, where necessary, beyond.



South Brook

The South Brook catchment area has been identified as a priority flood risk area by both the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council. Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) have been working in the [South Brook catchment area for the delivery of the Natural Flood Management \(NFM\) works](#).

“The catchment of the Southbrook is “flashy” – it rises very rapidly in response to rainfall. As recently as February 2022, this flood saw the Southbrook reach a record level – 1.71m. Anything that increases the flashiness of the catchment is highly undesirable. Any hardening of surfaces will be noticeable at the measuring station at Shaw School...and will significantly increase flood risk downstream (as well as within the villages)”

The Shaw and Whitley Community Emergency Group

Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

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

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

Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Charging

Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for the installation of public on-street electric charging facilities will be supported subject to heritage and other related design matters.

The reason for the policy

4.5.1 The need to drive private vehicles enables people to carry out their everyday business. However, facilitating the transition to low, or zero emission vehicles is key to lowering our carbon emissions, so increases in the availability of charging technology are welcomed and reflects a national drive towards Ultra Low Emission Vehicles¹⁴.

4.5.2 Electric vehicle infrastructure in new development is required to be implemented in accordance with relevant national and local guidance. In support of Part S of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010, the government has published '[Infrastructure for the Charging of Electric Vehicles – Approved Document S \(2021 Edition\)](#)'.

4.5.3 It is important that all new homes, regardless of tenure etc, enable people to safely and conveniently access ultra-low energy vehicle (EV) infrastructure. The Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023) includes a checklist that includes consideration of how charging points are integrated into proposals.

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

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

14. [Department for Transport, 2018: The Road to Zero Next steps towards cleaner roads transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy](#)

4.5.6 Improvements to the Melksham railway station ([see page 79 for more detail](#)) since the first edition of our Plan have provided some initial electric car charging points in the car park. Plans to increase the provision to six charging points as the demand increases have been developed and are supported by the two councils. This both encourages electric car use, and use of the train, typically when commuting or shopping.



Ultra Low Emission Vehicles

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

- uses low carbon technologies
- emits less than 75g of CO₂/km from the tailpipe
- is capable of operating in zero tailpipe emission mode for a range of at least ten miles.

Source: [Vehicle Certification Agency](#)



Housing and Infrastructure



"It's vital that the Neighbourhood Plan supports diverse development that suits the needs of the community... which delivers real benefits for the local area"

Policies in this section:

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

Community Engagement

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

Policy 5: Community Engagement

Development proposals should be prepared with early, proactive, proportionate, and effective engagement. Developers are therefore encouraged to follow the approach set out in the Melksham Community Engagement Protocol and the Wiltshire Council Statement of Community Involvement.

The reason for the policy

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

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

public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community”.¹⁵

4.6.3 Early discussion between applicants and the local community, as well as with the Local Planning Authority, from the earliest stages enables a more collaborative approach to the process of preparing a development proposal that will need to balance many factors as the design evolves. “Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.”¹⁶

4.6.4 The Planning Practice Guidance Note on Design¹⁷ emphasises the importance of community engagement:

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

15. National Planning Policy Framework, 2023. para 39

16. [National Planning Policy Framework, 2023. para 137](#)

17. [Planning Practice Guidance, Design: Process and tools last update Oct 19](#)

4.6.5 The above policy and the Community Engagement Protocol (see Appendix 1, [page 120](#)) are intended to facilitate a structured approach to enable effective involvement of the local community in outline and full planning applications addressing all aspects of a proposal, from design and layout to issues on climate change and energy generation. Pre-application community engagement can also be equally beneficial for reserved matters applications.

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



Housing Development

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

Policy 6: Housing at Defined Settlements

- 1. Proposals for sustainable housing accommodated through development and redevelopment opportunities within existing settlement boundaries of the Plan area will be supported.**
- 2. Housing outside settlement boundaries will be managed in accordance with the adopted Development Plan and should meet evidenced local housing need.**
- 3. Development proposals for new housing should demonstrate how their housing types and tenures respond positively to meeting local needs, informed by the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Area Housing Needs Assessment (2023), the Wiltshire Local Housing Needs Assessment, or any updates of these Assessments. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should respond positively to the following matters:**
 - a. delivering rented and owner-occupied homes in a tenure-blind mix, design and layout;**
 - b. increasing the supply of affordable homes in conformity with adopted Wiltshire Council affordable housing policy;**
 - c. addressing local issues of affordability and demand for affordable homes for first time buyers and local households on below average incomes, including providing First Homes housing through developer contribution at up to a 40% discount of the open market value (where it is commercially viable to do so);**
 - d. at Melksham and Bowerhill, prioritising the delivery of a balanced mix of two, three and four bedroom dwellings, which should include bungalows;**
 - e. at Shaw and Whitley, increasing the proportion of two and three bedroom dwellings, to address a shortfall in their availability; and,**
 - f. meeting the needs of an increasing local population of older people and those living with disabilities. Housing that meets part M4(2) of the Building Regulations, Category 2: accessible and adaptable dwellings will be supported. Proposals for age restricted housing and extra-care communities will be supported only in the most sustainable locations where they are closely linked to local services and public transport.**

The reason for the policy

4.7.1 The Wiltshire Core Strategy (and emerging Local Plan) Policy 1 (Settlement Strategy) classifies and establishes settlement boundaries. 'Settlement boundaries' generally delineate the extent of urban areas typically reflecting what has been built. Development within boundaries is generally supported. Development outside settlement boundaries is more controlled in the interests of balancing social, economic and environmental needs. Wiltshire Council may amend boundaries during the Plan period, as development takes place and allocations are built out on the edge of settlements.

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

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

4.7.4 Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area Housing Needs



Settlement Boundaries

A settlement boundary is a line that is drawn on a plan around a town or village, which reflects its built area. In general, there is a presumption in favour of development within the settlement boundary. Wiltshire Council updated the settlement boundaries in 2020 as part the Housing Site Allocations Plan. Any land and buildings outside of the boundary line are usually considered to be open countryside where development would be regulated with stricter planning policies.

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

Market Towns: [Melksham and Bowerhill village \(click for map\)](#)

Large Villages: [Shaw and Whitley \(click for map\)](#)

Small Villages: Beanacre and Berryfield (no settlement boundaries)

Assessment¹⁸ has provided updated independent evidence of the specific needs for market and affordable housing at Melksham and at Shaw and Whitley.

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

18. [Melksham Housing Needs Assessment, Aecom 2023 for the JMNP2](#)

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

4.7.7 The Housing Needs Assessment suggested that at Melksham, future housing delivery should focus on the delivery of 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom, 4-bedroom dwellings, but at Shaw and Whitley the emphasis should be to provide smaller homes to re-balance the opportunities. This mix may require some adjustment for the sub-areas based on the existing dwelling mixes and populations in these areas, which may include 1-bed homes.

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

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

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

4.7.10 It's important to note that affordable housing requirements may vary on a site-by-site basis, taking into account updated evidence of need, or local factors including the viability and cost of delivering development. Abnormal costs such as demolition, ground remediation etc. will impact on the number of affordable homes.



First Homes

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

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

Allocations of Land for Housing

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

Background and reason for the allocation policies

4.8.1 Site allocations:

At Melksham and Bowerhill

- 7.1 - Land at Cooper Tires
- 7.2 - Land at the Former Melksham Library, Lowbourne House and Car Park
- 7.3 - Land South of Western Way, Bowerhill

At Whitley

- 7.4 - Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley
- 7.5 - Land at Middle Farm, Whitley

4.8.2 As set out earlier in this Plan, sites allocated for housing through Neighbourhood Plans contribute towards meeting housing requirements and local needs, as well as delivering a sustainable approach to plan-led development with the overall objective being to secure the best possible outcomes from development for our communities.

Site Assessment and Selection

4.8.3 Combining the information on available sites from the [Wiltshire Council Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment \(SHELAA\)](#) and responses to a local “call for sites” undertaken by JMNP2 created a long-list of 109 potential site options. These were independently assessed¹⁹ by consultant AECOM employing a robust, logical two stage methodology based on the Government’s National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and the Locality Site Assessment Toolkit. This produced a list of 35 brownfield and greenfield sites at Melksham, Shaw and Whitley, Beanacre and Berryfield that they considered ‘potentially suitable and feasible’ for possible allocation in the JMNP2.

4.8.4 The site selection process also included dialogue with landowners; had regard to locally specific circumstances; and considered how each site was capable of addressing the housing requirements and the Neighbourhood Plan objectives. In addition, JMNP2 site selections had to avoid conflict or duplication with greenfield sites being proposed for allocation by the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan.

19. [Site Options and Assessment Report, Aecom 2023 for the JMNP2](#)



Finding the right sites for the JMNP2

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

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

Every available site was subject to an initial independent assessment of suitability and deliverability to produce a short-list of sites potentially worthy of further consideration. Sites have also been reviewed to consider how well they can achieve the JMNP objectives and meet community needs.

The local community, stakeholders and site promoters have considered the principle of JMNP sites allocation and proposed sites through initial informal and two formal stages of pre-submission consultation.

Melksham Brownfield Site Allocations (Policies 7.1 and 7.2)

4.8.5 Wiltshire Council, together with Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council, have agreed a collaborative approach to coordinate Local Plan strategic allocation of greenfield sites with the sustainable brownfield-led approach to site allocations in the town by JMNP2.

4.8.6 Community engagement undertaken to shape the Melksham Town Centre Masterplan Report²⁰ identified strong support for the regeneration of both the Cooper Tires site and the former library site. Assessment of greenfield and brownfield-led site allocation options through Strategic Environmental Assessment of the potential allocations confirmed that JMNP2 brownfield sites represent the most sustainable and deliverable approach. NPPF Paragraph 124(c) states policy should “...give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated ...land”.

20. [Melksham Town Centre Masterplan Report, Aecom 2023 for the JMNP2](#)

4.8.7 Both sites are available and capable of contributing to meeting the JMNP2 housing allocation requirement, although each present significant challenges to deliverability. Owners of both sites have provided evidence to support the feasibility of regeneration and confirmed active progress towards implementation of site development within the JMNP2 period.

Land South of Western Way, Bowerhill (Policy 7.3)

4.8.8 In December 2023, outline planning permission was granted on appeal²¹ for the development of 210 dwellings and a 70 bed care home (equivalent to 38 dwellings) on land south of Western Way. The initial Regulation 14 pre-submission draft of JMNP2 did not propose allocation of the site, which was instead proposed as a Green Wedge between Melksham and Bowerhill as part of Policy 19 in JMNP2. The planning consent, however, has established the principle and amount of residential development and has removed the ability of JMNP2 to designate the land as a Green Wedge. JMNP2 must address these impacts. This allocation policy 7.3 (Land South of Western Way) adopts a positive approach to these new circumstances. It takes account of consented housing numbers, coordinates the site development with the future surrounding context and establishes policy criteria that will help secure JMNP2 objectives through the detailed design and housing mix.

21. [Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/23/3324031](#)

Allocations at Shaw and Whitley (Policy 7.4 and Policy 7.5)

4.8.9 At Shaw and Whitley, JMNP2 is continuing to take the lead in planning for local housing needs and allocates approximately 55 dwellings (15 fewer than the emerging Local Plan housing requirement). This approach takes account of locally valued landscapes and the distinctiveness of Shaw and Whitley.

4.8.10 The small range of available sites assessed as potentially suitable, taken together with the priority to protect the rural separation between Shaw and Whitley, led to the consideration of more constrained sites that present the potential to efficiently meet the housing requirement and deliver smaller homes including at least 16 Affordable Homes, which are needed and have not been delivered sufficiently within the villages.

4.8.11 The allocation policies follow on the next pages.

Land at Cooper Tires Factory Site

continued overleaf

Policy 7.1: Land at Cooper Tires Factory Site

Land at the former Cooper Tires main factory site, as defined in figure 6, is allocated for development of a mixed use scheme which will optimise the effective use of the site, including:

- a. approximately 100 dwellings in the part of the overall site which is within Flood Zone 1 (and to include affordable housing subject to commercial viability) within the Plan period. Further housing will be supported in principle in the context of a comprehensive masterplan for the site which addresses key policies and constraints, including flood risk;
- b. other uses, including employment, community, leisure, retail and cultural uses where they contribute to creating a sustainable neighbourhood, are consistent with other adopted policies, scheme viability and the delivery strategy;
- c. new accessible walking and

- d. flood mitigation infrastructure.

A single comprehensive masterplan, phasing and delivery strategy for the development should be prepared, and approved by the local planning authority, as part of, or in advance of any planning application being submitted for the whole or part of the allocated site. Detailed planning applications should be in accordance with the approved masterplan. The masterplan and planning proposals should be prepared in the context of this Plan, the Wiltshire Local Plan and national planning policy, and with early pre-application consultation with the local community. The masterplan should define the appropriate mix of uses on the site.

Development proposals for the site will:

Heritage

1. Be supported by a heritage assessment of the on-site and neighbouring buildings and the impact of proposed development.
2. Protect and enhance heritage assets and their setting; Avon House (listed Grade II) and the former factory canteen (local non-designated heritage asset) and adjacent heritage assets; Town Bridge (Grade II) and Unicorn Public House (Grade II) in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 21.
3. Investigate the presence and significance of archaeological remains in line with an initial desk based archaeological assessment.

Landscape, Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity

4. Be informed by arboriculture, landscape and ecology surveys and an approved management and construction management plan to

secure the protection of existing and enhanced landscape features, priority species and ecology within the site and River Avon environment.

5. Provide a scheme of site landscape, green and blue infrastructure and communal outdoor space that protects existing trees, contributes positively to resident health and wellbeing and increases on-site tree canopy cover in accordance with JMNP2 Policy 17.

6. Deliver a minimum 10% net gain in on-site biodiversity.

Design

7. Be of high quality design, appearance and materials in conformity with JMNP2 Policies 9 and 20 and demonstrate a positive response to Melksham Town Centre Master Plan Report (2023) and Melksham Design Guide and Codes (2023) and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2024).

8. Protect the amenity of neighbouring employment and retail

uses and residents of Scotland Road, Bath Road and dwellings adjacent to the north-west site boundary.

9. Provide a high standard of residential amenity and wellbeing by achieving design principles contained within recognised design guidance including "Buildings for a Healthy Life" (Homes England), or any subsequent revision'.

10. Address climate change through mitigation and adaptation and contribute to Wiltshire Council's carbon neutrality ambitions by including a significant use of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, the re-use of the existing built fabric, and the application of the energy hierarchy.

Flood Risk

11. Be supported by a proportionate flood risk assessment, testing and mitigation strategy.

12. Include sustainable drainage to manage the discharge of surface water to mitigate flood risk within

the site, neighbouring land and downstream.

13. Include measures to ensure the safety of residents, staff and visitors in the event of flooding.

Access and Movement

14. Make safe and convenient level walking and 'wheeling' connections within the site and to the existing public realm.

15. Provide vehicular access to the site and address any necessary off-site works informed by an access and transportation study and strategy.

16. Implement resident, visitor and commercial premises parking and servicing in conformity with Wiltshire Council parking standards.

17. Ensure ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure provided in line with JMNP2 Policy 4.

continued overleaf

18. Provide resident and employee travel plans to encourage sustainable travel.

Wilts & Berks Canal Link Project

19. Integrate the future implementation of the Wilts & Berks Canal Link project within the scheme design where it relates directly to the site in conformity with Wiltshire Development Plan policies for safeguarding the route of the Wilts & Berks Canal and explore opportunities for renewable energy installation.

Infrastructure

20. Make appropriate and relevant financial contributions to infrastructure, which may include proportionate contributions to:

- **Early years, primary and secondary education**
- **Healthcare capacity to meet the needs created by the development.**
- **Measures to positively support walking and wheeling in Melksham including links between the site, Melksham Railway Station and town centre and neighbouring facilities and communities.**

The level of contribution sought will be considered in the context of site viability and other relevant considerations, including deliverability.

The reason for the policy

4.8.12 The 12.8 hectare Cooper Tires main factory site is immediately to the west of the town centre and bank of the River Avon. It is bordered by Bath Road, Scotland Road and the A350. The allocation includes the small “Bakers Yard” car park to the west side of Bath Road and the car park to the north of Scotland Road.

4.8.13 It has been an industrial site since the 18th Century, producing tyres from the 1890s, and was one of Melksham’s most important employers until it closed at the end of 2023. The whole site is now vacant.

4.8.14 National planning policy provides strong support for development on previously developed “brownfield” land. Planning policies should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs.

4.8.15 Wiltshire Core Strategy existing employment site Core Policy 35 does not identify Cooper Tires as a Principal Employment Site, but enables managed diversification of existing employment land. Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 36 supports regeneration opportunities and aims to maximise the re-use of previously developed land and neighbourhood plans facilitating economic regeneration and the preparation of masterplans for specific sites. The Wiltshire Employment Land Review ([updated 2023](#)) concluded the site

does not meet modern requirements well and has potential for development with a mix of uses, although residential uses were not included.

4.8.16 Place Shaping Priority 1 as contained in the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan “[Planning for Melksham](#)” strategy identifies the importance placed on maximising the use of brownfield land in association with town centre regeneration.

4.8.17 JMNP2 engagement has demonstrated that allocation of the site for regeneration is well supported by the community and owners and is supported by Wiltshire Council. However, the site is not directly addressed by Wiltshire Council’s emerging Local Plan and in response to community wishes, national planning guidance and a need to enable re-use of the vacant site, JMNP2 has adopted a proactive and positive approach to planning for the future of the site through its allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.8.18 Owners of the site have made it available for allocation within the JMNP period (2020-38). They have confirmed site availability, provided a suite of assessment evidence and maintained support for allocation. In addition, representations have stated the support and intentions of a new owner to progress master planning and applications for the redevelopment of the site.

4.8.19 The site is highly sustainable brownfield land, within easy walking and cycling reach of the town centre, convenience stores, King George V Recreation Ground and the Campus leisure and

library facilities. It is also well connected to Melksham railway station and regular bus services to surrounding towns.

4.8.20 Regeneration of the site delivers on nearly all of the Neighbourhood Plan’s sustainable development, environmental, housing, economic and wellbeing objectives. It can renew its vitality in a distinct urban neighbourhood of high-quality homes, mixed commercial, recreational, cultural and some retail uses. Regeneration set within new and re-purposed heritage buildings and addressing new streets and a public, habitat rich, riverside space.

4.8.21 In recognition of the site size, complexity and significant flood risk and contamination constraints, the JMNP2 has adopted an evidence-led and realistic approach to its allocation. This is based upon significant engagement with Wiltshire Council and site owners, analysis of site constraints, capacity and viability issues, and the review of recent and similar local case studies, including the emerging Local Plan allocation of Innox Mills at Trowbridge.

4.8.22 Whilst the independent assessment of the site considered it potentially suitable for allocation as sustainably located, previously developed and under-used land, analysis and evidence gathered by JMNP2 and provided by site owners identified that it is significantly constrained by flood risk (zones 2 and 3) and contamination. This restricts land readily available for residential development to about 25% of the site and increases remediation costs that severely challenge the viable regeneration of the site.

4.8.23 Development of the site must address site-wide flood issues and mitigation measures, de-contamination and infrastructure provision. It is therefore vital that development is in accordance with a comprehensive master plan and delivery strategy, approved by Wiltshire Council, which address allocation policy requirements.

4.8.24 It is recognised that regeneration is likely to commence later in the plan period and extend beyond 2038. Initial residential-led phases, generating value on less constrained parts of the site are considered feasible and viable for delivery by 2038. The allocation therefore sets proportionate expectation for development of approximately 100 dwellings on land within Flood Zone 1 up to 2038, but it supports further residential development where this enables delivery of viable mixed use regeneration on the site.

4.8.25 As in other brownfield regeneration allocations promoted through the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan, the allocation supports a potential to reduce the amount of affordable housing provision to achieve a viable allocation.

4.8.26 Because of the complexity associated with this allocation, the evidence base report provides both greater detail on how JMNP2 objectives and policies will be realised in the site regeneration and additional details that underpin the allocation's quantities, mix and disposition. This can be found on the JMNP2 pages of the Plan website ([and by clicking here if reading a PDF](#)).

Figure 6: Cooper Tires Site. The hatched area illustrates the anticipated developable area for housing taking into account Flood Zone 3. (approximate area / not to scale)



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Land at the Former Melksham Library Site

Policy 7.2: Land at the Former Melksham Library Site

Land at the former Melksham Library, Lowbourne House and adjacent public car park shown in figure 7 is allocated for development of approximately 50 specialist dwellings for older people including affordable housing (Class C3) or to purchase through shared ownership via a registered social provider.

Development proposals for the site should:

Heritage

1. Be supported by a heritage assessment of the existing buildings and the impact of proposed development.
2. Protect and enhance the setting of adjacent listed buildings and the character of Melksham Conservation Area.

3. Investigate the presence and significance of archaeological remains and avoid areas of high value remains where preservation in situ is to be required.

Landscape, Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity

4. Be informed by arboriculture, landscape and ecology surveys and an approved management and construction management plan to secure the protection of existing and enhanced landscape features, priority species and ecology within the site.
5. Provide a scheme of site landscape, green and blue infrastructure and communal outdoor space that protects existing trees, contributes positively to resident health and wellbeing and increases on-site tree canopy cover in accordance with JMNP2 Policy 17.
6. Deliver a minimum 10% net gain in on-site biodiversity.

Design

7. Be of high quality design, appearance and materials in conformity with JMNP2 Policies 9 and 20 and demonstrate a positive response to the Melksham Town Centre Master Plan Report (2023) and Melksham Design Guide and Codes (2023) and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2024).
8. Protect the amenity of neighbouring uses and residents of Union Street.
9. Provide a high standard of residential amenity and wellbeing by achieving design principles contained within recognised design guidance for specialist housing for older people such as "Design Principles for Extra Care Housing" (Housing Learning and Improvement Network, 2020).

continued overleaf

10. Address climate change through mitigation and adaptation and contribute to Wiltshire Council's carbon neutrality ambitions by including a significant use of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, the re-use of the existing built fabric, and the application of the energy hierarchy.

Flood Risk

11. Be supported by a proportionate flood risk assessment and strategy.

12. Include sustainable drainage to manage the discharge of surface water to mitigate flood risk within the site and neighbouring land.

13. Include a flood emergency plan, where considered necessary to ensure the safety of residents, staff and visitors in the event of flooding.

Access and Movement

14. Make safe and convenient level walking and 'wheeling' connections within the site and to the public realm.

15. Provide vehicular access to the site from Lowbourn, potentially utilising the existing access point.

16. Implement resident, visitor and commercial premises parking and servicing in conformity with Wiltshire Council parking standards and include safe parking for resident personal mobility devices.

17. Provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with JMNP2 Policy 4.

18. Provide resident and employee travel plans to encourage sustainable travel.

Infrastructure

19. Make appropriate and relevant financial contributions to infrastructure, which may include proportionate contributions to:

- **Healthcare capacity to meet the needs created by the development.**
- **Measures to positively support walking and wheeling in Melksham town centre.**
- **Town centre public car parking improvements as identified in the Melksham Parking Study (AECOM 2024) to mitigate the loss of public parking within the allocation site.**

Land at the Former Melksham Library Site

The reason for the policy

4.8.27 The site is around 0.65 hectares and is previously developed land located on the eastern edge of the town centre, within the Melksham Conservation Area. The whole site is owned by Wiltshire Council and comprises the site of the former library and attached restaurant building, vacant Further Education building, Lowbourn House, and the associated 66 space Lowbourn public car park to the east.

4.8.28 The site has been independently assessed as a suitable allocation and found to be in a highly sustainable location within a short and level walking distance of town centre shops and services, the Campus leisure centre and library, King George V Recreation Ground and local bus services.

4.8.29 The site is within Melksham Conservation Area. However, the remaining building, Lowbourn House, is not listed or identified as a non-designated heritage asset. Mature trees which line the eastern boundary of the car park site contribute to the character of the conservation area and are protected.

Figure 7: Library Site (approximate area / not to scale)



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4.8.30 The existing public car park has been declared surplus to requirements by Wiltshire Council. A car parking study commissioned by JMNP2 observed the 66 space car park to have a 19% occupancy during surveys, the lowest in the town centre. The parking survey and future parking demand analysis showed a surplus of parking within Melksham town centre overall. It may be concluded that the loss of the Lowbourn Car Park will not adversely impact on the vitality of the town centre, but remaining car parks should provide an enhanced standard.

4.8.31 Outside the site, parts of Lowbourn are subject to flood risk from Clackers Brook. This may have an impact on access to the site. A strategy for emergency access in the event of flooding will be required to safeguard more vulnerable residents.

4.8.32 The site has been made available by the owner for allocation to support the development of extra care apartments for older people. Wiltshire Council intend to manage the development as Affordable Housing.

4.8.33 The [Melksham Housing Needs Assessment](#) identifies there is a need for housing to meet the needs of the proportion of older people living within the community. The proportion of people over the age of 75 is predicted to rise from 8.8% to 14.7% by 2038.

4.8.34 As with Cooper Tires, redevelopment of this site regenerates a vacant site of previously developed land and contributes to improving town centre vitality.

4.8.35 Specialist Housing for older people should be within purpose designed buildings. Allocation parameters require these to be provided to a high standard of accommodation meeting use specific design guidance whilst protecting amenity and character.

4.8.36 An independent viability assessment undertaken to support the allocation has suggested the housing should be a mix of open market and affordable housing units. Whilst the owners (Wiltshire Council) aim to provide a 100% affordable scheme, this allocation will provide the flexibility to support a deliverable scheme.

Land South of Western Way, Bowerhill

Policy 7.3: Land South of Western Way Bowerhill

Land South of Western Way, Bowerhill, Melksham, as identified in figure 8, is allocated for development of:

- a. Up to 210 dwellings (class C3) including Affordable Housing, to meet identified local housing needs in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 6; and,
- b. a 70-bed residential care home (Class C2).

Any detailed application being submitted for the whole or part of the site must be in accordance with the approved parameters plans for development of the site.

Development of the site will:

Landscape, Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity

1. Be informed by arboriculture, landscape and ecology surveys and an approved management and construction management plan to secure the protection of existing and enhanced landscape features, priority species and ecology within and adjacent to the site.
2. Provide a scheme of site landscape, green and blue infrastructure and communal outdoor space that protects existing trees, contributes positively to resident health and wellbeing in accordance with JMNP2 Policies 12, 14, 17 and 18.
3. Deliver a minimum 10% net gain in on-site biodiversity.

Design

4. Include a site layout, built

form and scale that minimises visual impacts and safeguards the amenities of existing and new neighbouring residents, education and employment uses.

5. Provide a high standard of residential amenity and wellbeing by achieving design principles contained within recognised design guidance including "Buildings for a Healthy Life" (Homes England) and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2024).

6. Be of high quality design, appearance and materials in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 20 and demonstrating a positive response to the Melksham Design Guide and Codes (2023).

7. Address climate change through mitigation and adaptation and contribute to Wiltshire Council's carbon neutrality ambitions by including a significant use of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, the re-use of the existing built fabric, and the application of the energy hierarchy.

continued overleaf

Flood Risk

8. Be supported by a proportionate flood risk assessment and strategy.
9. Include sustainable drainage to manage the discharge of surface water to mitigate flood risk within the site and neighbouring land.
10. Integrate measures to protect and enhance watercourses surrounding the site through appropriate buffers to allow for access and maintenance.

Access and Movement

11. Provide a new vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Maitland Place and an internal road network which will incorporate a bus loop.
12. Provide a secondary emergency highway access.
13. Create a pedestrian and cycle only access from Western Way and the Public Right of Way MELW42 to

the west of the site boundary and a pedestrian and cycle path network including a spine and orbital pedestrian route connecting with on-site green and blue infrastructure and neighbouring communities, schools and facilities;

14. Fund provision of a new signal controlled 'Toucan' crossing of Western Way.

15. Create a 2 metre wide footway connection along the southern side of Western Way adjacent to the site boundary.

16. Contribute towards provision of public transport and enhancement of facilities within less than 5 minutes easy walk of all residents and contributions to provide a viable service.

17. Implement resident and visitor parking and servicing in conformity with Wiltshire Council parking standards.

18. Provide ultra-low emission

vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with JMNP2 Policy 4.

19. Provide resident and employee travel plans to encourage sustainable travel.

Infrastructure

20. Make appropriate and relevant financial contributions to infrastructure, which may include proportionate contributions to:

- Early years education where appropriate.
- On or off-site healthcare capacity to meet the needs created by the development.
- Measures to positively support walking, wheeling and public transport use between the site, Melksham town centre and Melksham railway station and linking into existing networks.

Land South of Western Way, Bowerhill

The reason for the policy

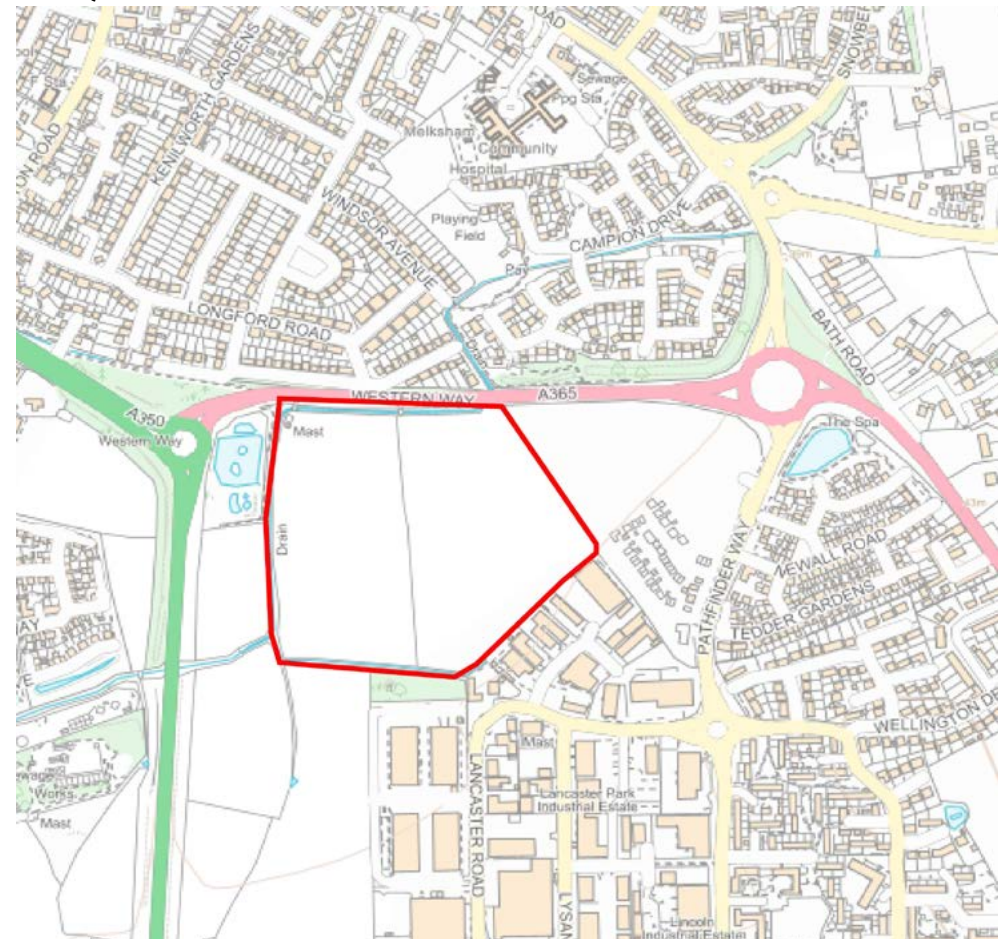
4.8.37 The 10.25 hectare greenfield site located to the south of Melksham, north-west of Bowerhill and east of Berryfield has been made available for allocation by JMNP2. In late 2023 outline planning permission granted on appeal established the principle for development of 210 dwellings and a 70 bed care home, with vehicle access from Maitland Place and broad landscape, layout and density parameters. Further “reserved matters” planning consents will be required to establish the precise layout, housing mix and design of the development.

4.8.38 The allocation addresses these new circumstances to ensure the development of the site is both best managed to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents and employers, and also secure optimum benefits for the community.

4.8.39 The proposed allocation of the site therefore seeks to:

- Regularise the consented housing development within JMNP2 to account for the 210 homes it enables;
- Plan positively to influence and set the layout, design and mix of future detailed housing proposals to meet local needs and expectations.

Figure 8: Land South of Western Way (approximate area/not to scale)



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Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley

Policy 7.4: Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley

Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley, as identified in figure 9, is allocated for:

- a. redevelopment of redundant modern agricultural buildings and barns; and,
- b. conservation and re-use of the Grade II listed Whitley Farm barn.

Conservation-led development of the site will:

Heritage

1. Be informed by a robust scheme specific heritage assessment which justifies any proposed change of use, and the extent, scale and design of the redevelopment and any conversion of the listed barn, having regard to the impact on the heritage assets at the site.

2. Secures the protection or enhancement of the setting of Whitley Farm House and barn (Grade II), in conformity with adopted Wiltshire Development Plan heritage policy and JMNP2 Policy 2.

3. Investigate the presence and significance of archaeological remains and avoids high value archaeological remains where preservation in situ is to be required.

Landscape, Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity

4. Be informed by arboriculture, landscape and ecology surveys and an approved management and construction management plan to secure the protection of existing and enhanced landscape features, priority species and ecology within the site and South Brook environment,

5. Provide a scheme of site landscape, green and blue infrastructure and communal outdoor

space that protects existing trees, enhances the rural setting, and contributes positively to resident health and wellbeing. On-site tree canopy cover should be increased in accordance with JMNP2 Policy 17.

6. Deliver a minimum 10% net gain in on-site biodiversity.

Design

7. Be of a sensitive high-quality design, appearance and materials that responds appropriately to the listed farm setting informed by The National Farmstead Assessment Framework (Historic England) and in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 20 and demonstrating a positive response to the Melksham Design Guide and Codes (2023) and Wiltshire Design Guide (2024).

8. Safeguards the amenities of neighbouring residents.

continued overleaf

9. With regard to any residential development which may be proposed, provide a high standard of residential amenity and wellbeing by achieving design principles contained within recognised design guidance including “Buildings for a Healthy Life” (Homes England).

10. Address climate change through mitigation and adaptation and contribute to Wiltshire Council’s carbon neutrality ambitions by including a significant use of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, the re-use of the existing built fabric, and the application of the energy hierarchy.

Flood Risk

11. Be supported by a proportionate flood risk assessment and strategy.

12. Include sustainable drainage to manage the discharge of surface water to mitigate flood risk downstream and within the site and prevent and, where possible, reduce

flood risk to neighbouring land where it relates to the allocation site.

13. Off-site works on land within the landowner’s control to improve flood management within Whitley.

Access and Movement

14. Provide vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from First Lane.

15. Provide safe and convenient walking and wheeling connections to existing pavements in First Lane and the existing public right of way adjacent to the rural boundary of the site.

16. Implement residential and employee vehicle and cycle parking in conformity with adopted Wiltshire Council parking standards.

17. Provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with JMNP2 Policy 4.

Infrastructure

18. Make appropriate and relevant financial contributions to infrastructure, which may include proportionate contributions to:

- **Early years, primary and secondary education.**
- **Off-site healthcare capacity to meet the needs created by the development.**
- **Measures to positively support walking, wheeling and public transport use within Shaw and Whitley.**

Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley

The reason for the policy

4.8.40 The 1.6 hectare site is located off First Lane, adjacent to the built up area and settlement boundary of Whitley and in close proximity to local services. The site includes the Grade II listed Whitley Farmhouse and barn adjacent to a farmyard with 20th Century agricultural structures in poor condition that extend back into the neighbouring field. Whilst the structures reflect the agricultural character of the farm, their poor condition does not enhance the setting of the listed buildings and impacts the wider rural and village character.

4.8.41 The site owners have stated that changes in farming operations within its estate have resulted in Whitley Farm, and its buildings (and structures), becoming obsolete in some cases and under-used in terms of a working farm. Where sufficient evidence is provided to establish that the farm is redundant, conservation-led regeneration will be supported.

4.8.42 Where the farm is redundant, removal of the modern farmyard structures and limited development of the farmyard part of the site could protect and enhance the setting of the listed buildings and improve the character of First Lane and the village's rural setting. The appropriate adaptive reuse of the disused barn

Figure 9: Land at Whitley Farm (approximate area / not to scale)



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can also help bring this heritage asset into new productive use to sustain its fabric.

4.8.43 Wiltshire Council require any proposed change of use and development of the site to be supported by an allocation in JMNP2 and, in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment) that any following scheme proposal is to be informed by a robust heritage assessment that ensures the significance of the heritage assets and their settings is understood, and will be appropriately enhanced in development proposals.

4.8.44 The National Farmstead Assessment Framework (Historic England 2015) is guidance to help secure sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads and their buildings through the planning system. It will be expected that any scheme proposed for the site will demonstrate how it has been informed by this document.

4.8.45 Landscape assessments carried out for the JMNP in 2020 identified the need for any scheme to secure the restoration of damaged boundary hedgerow and removal of redundant structures to conserve and enhance the setting of the elevated farm complex in rural views from public rights of way and the valued separation and open countryside between Shaw and Whitley.

4.8.46 The allocation of the whole Whitley Farm site does not seek to identify or preclude the potential future extent, form or use of the site, but provides clarity and support to enable proposals to conserve and regenerate the site, its historic buildings and its rural setting.

Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley

Policy 7.5: Allocation of Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley

The 3-hectare plot of land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley as identified in figure 9a is allocated for development of about 55 dwellings including affordable and accessible housing and bungalows, and 1 hectare of buffer landscape and open space.

A single comprehensive masterplan, phasing and delivery strategy for the development must be prepared, and then approved by the Local Planning Authority, as part of, or in advance of any planning application being submitted for the whole or part of the allocated site. This must take account of the requirements of this policy and the principles shown within the concept plan. Detailed Planning applications must be in accordance with the approved

masterplan.

Development proposals for the site will:

Heritage

1. Be informed by a proportionate heritage assessment approved by Wiltshire Council.
2. Protect the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, Whitley House and barn (Grade II), in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 21.
3. Investigate the presence and significance of archaeological remains and avoid high value remains where preservation in situ is to be required.

Landscape, Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity

4. Be informed by arboriculture, landscape and ecology surveys and an approved management and

construction management plan to secure the protection of existing and enhanced landscape features, priority species and ecology within the site.

5. Provide a scheme of site landscape, green and blue infrastructure and communal outdoor space of about 1 hectare that minimises impacts on rural openness and tranquillity, protects existing trees, contributes positively to resident health and wellbeing and increases on-site tree canopy cover by 20% in accordance with JMNP2 Policies 12, 14, 17 and 18.

6. Deliver a minimum 10% net gain in on-site biodiversity.

Design

7. Be of a layout and form that minimises visual impacts and safeguards the amenities of neighbouring residents.

continued overleaf

8. Provide a high standard of residential amenity and wellbeing by achieving design principles contained within recognised design guidance including "Buildings for a Healthy Life" (Homes England), and the Wiltshire Design Guide (2024).

9. Be of a distinctive high quality design, appearance and materials in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 20 and demonstrating a positive response to the Melksham Design Guide and Codes (2023).

10. Address climate change through mitigation and adaptation and contribute to Wiltshire Council's carbon neutrality ambitions by including a significant use of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, the re-use of the existing built fabric, and the application of the energy hierarchy.

Flood Risk

11. Be supported by a proportionate flood risk assessment and strategy.

12. Include sustainable drainage to manage the discharge of surface water to mitigate flood risk within the site and prevent and where possible reduce flood risk to neighbouring land where it relates to the allocation site.

Access and Movement

13. Provide a vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Corsham Road.

14. Provide safe and convenient walking and wheeling connections to existing pavements in Corsham Road and the existing Public Right of Way through the site.

15. Fund a new pedestrian crossing of Corsham Road to adoptable standard.

16. Protect and enhance the existing Public Right of Way along the site's northern boundary with connections to on-site public open space provision in conformity with JMNP2 Policy 11.

17. Implement residential and employee vehicle and cycle parking in conformity with adopted Wiltshire Council parking standards.

18. Provide ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) charging infrastructure in line with JMNP2 Policy 4.

Infrastructure

19. Make appropriate and relevant financial contributions to infrastructure, which may include proportionate contributions to:

- Early years, primary and secondary education.
- Off-site healthcare capacity to meet the needs created by the development.
- Measures to positively support walking, wheeling and public transport use.

Land at Middle Farm, Corsham Road, Whitley

The reason for the policy

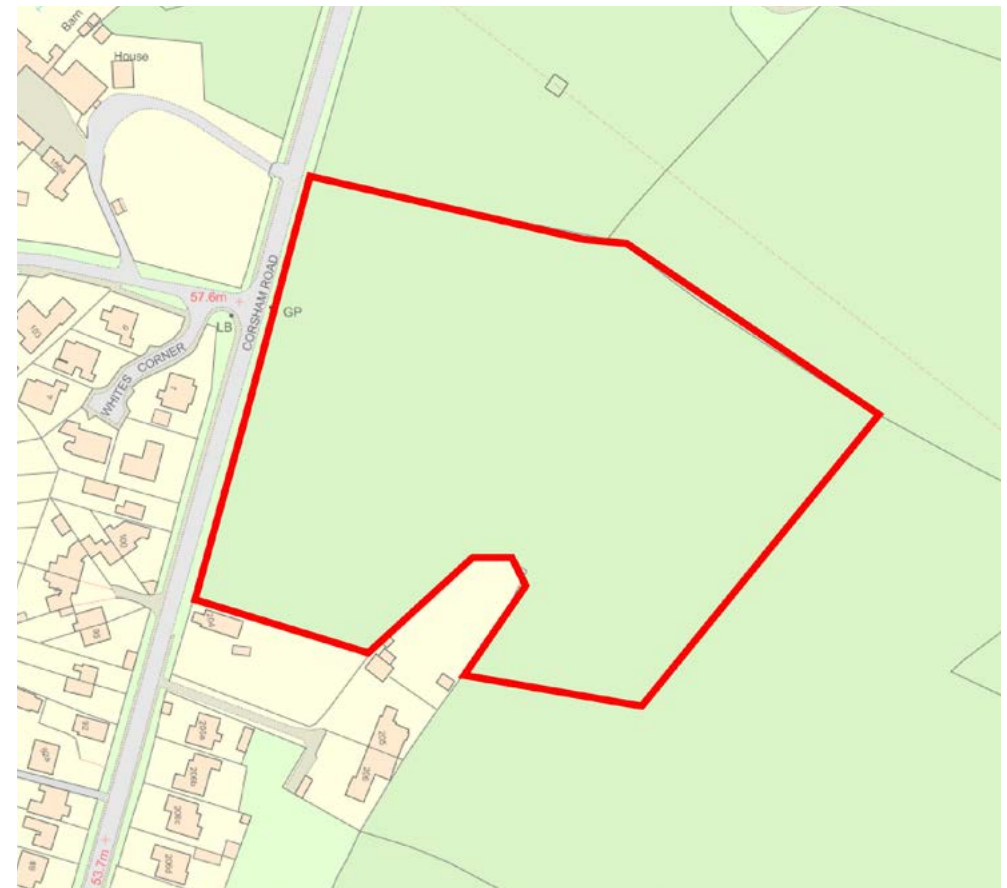
4.8.47 JMNP1 allocated 1.6 hectares of land at Middle Farm for development of about 18 dwellings immediately to the north east of Whitley settlement boundary. The JMNP1 allocation is replaced and updated with a new allocation site of around 3 hectares. This incorporates all of the previously allocated c1.6 hectares of land and adds a c1.5 hectare area to its east. The allocation provides capacity for approximately 55 dwellings and 1 hectare of buffer landscape and open space.

4.8.48 The overall allocated area is confined to the redline area in order to minimise landscape and visual impacts that were given significant weight in the assessment of suitability of the site.

4.8.49 33% of the allocation site is to be retained as green infrastructure and buffer landscape. This will significantly reduce the extent of housing development and soften views from the countryside, also strengthening the visual separation between Whitley and the nearby electricity sub-station and provide enhanced biodiversity and amenity for residents.

4.8.50 The allocation site is well-located to enable walking and cycling to local facilities and public transport stops and will utilise a single access point onto Corsham Road, together with providing

Figure 9a: Land at Middle Farm (approximate area / not to scale)



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new pedestrian facilities on the busy road as part of the allocation requirements. Coordinated planning of both sites enables local housing needs to be met within an efficient use of the site. Single ownership of both sites enables this coordinated approach.

4.8.51 The site is allocated for the development of two, three and four bedroom dwellings, addressing identified housing needs within an efficient use of the site. This reflects the character of smaller houses similar to existing development in Whitley.

4.8.52 In conformity with adopted Wiltshire Development Plan policy, housing will include at least 16 Affordable Homes. Housing types will be required to meet the specific local housing needs of Shaw and Whitley. In particular it will provide smaller and accessible homes and bungalows.

4.8.53 The site owner has committed to providing bungalows within the housing mix and 10% of the market housing designed to be accessible to wheelchair users, above emerging Local Plan standards.

4.8.54 The updated allocation continues to require the provision of a new pedestrian crossing facility and footway connections to link into the existing pavement along Corsham Road.

Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

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

Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities

Development proposals for housing development should consider, assess, and address their necessary infrastructure requirements and, insofar as they relate to matters within the applicant's control, schedule any related programmes of work in co-ordination with the housing development to deliver infrastructure in a timely fashion.

The reason for the policy

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

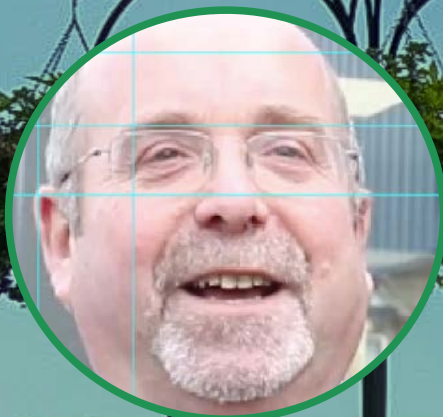
4.8.56 During preparation of the Plan, residents made it clear that they felt it important that new housing developments should be delivered in Melksham alongside the necessary services and facilities, such as healthcare, education, green spaces and transport infrastructure.

4.8.57 Financial contributions are required as appropriate from developers for the associated infrastructure cost implications of that development. In Wiltshire this includes Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and S106 contributions from legal agreements on development. The Local Planning Authority is required to produce annual infrastructure funding statements to set out how much money has been raised through developer contributions (CIL and S106) and how it has been spent²².

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

22. The priorities for CIL spending by [Wiltshire Council](#) set out priorities for CIL funding across Wiltshire and in the Melksham area

Shopping, Working and Getting Around



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

Policies in this section:

Policy 9: Town Centre

Policy 10: Employment Sites

Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

Town Centre

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

Policy 9: Town Centre

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

- a. proposals are in conformity with the adopted Wiltshire Development Plan having regard to the NPPF (Chapter 7) and the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order. Development proposals within and at the edge of the defined town centre area should demonstrate how they will make a proportionate and positive contribution to achieving the priority aims of the Melksham Town Centre master plan Report 2023;
- b. the proposal is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre of this Market Town and, where appropriate, preserves or enhances the Conservation Area;
- c. access to public transport, walking and cycle routes and car parking is considered and addressed;
- d. where appropriate, a positive contribution is made to conserving and enhancing the appearance and quality of town centre frontages;
- e. development proposals at edge of centre locations and locations inter-connected with the defined town centre area (see figure 10) will, additional to criteria a-d, be required to evidence that there are no suitable and viable sites or buildings within the defined town centre area;
- f. planning applications for development or change of use of ground floor frontages within the defined town centre primary shopping area (see figure 10) retain or enhance the continuity of active ground floor shop front uses; and,
- g. where relevant, productive use is made of upper floors of town centre premises, including for offices, small businesses and residential use with independent access, where they sustain or enhance the vitality of the host building use and Melksham town centre. Development proposals for Main Town Centre Uses outside of the defined town centre will be required to demonstrate that there are no suitable and viable sites or buildings within the defined town centre.

The reason for the policy

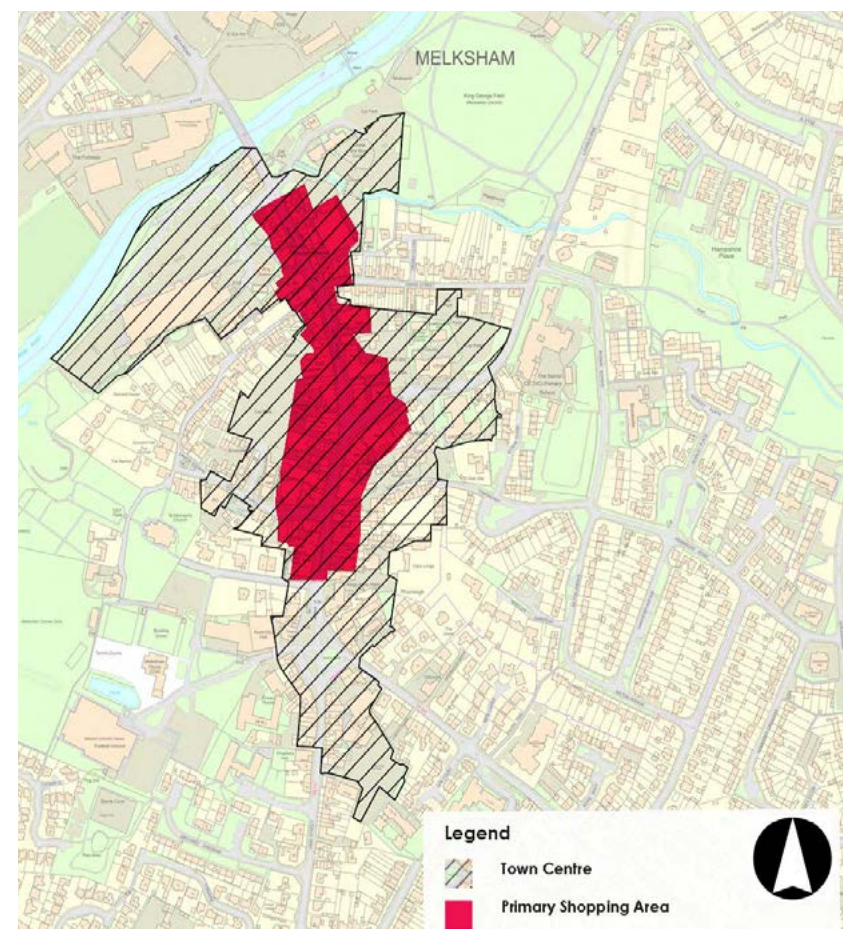
4.9.1 In the rapidly changing national and local context for high streets and market towns, we want to enable our town to change and evolve in response to challenges, changes and opportunities. Most recently, the increase of home-working could provide a boost to local high streets, which means many high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

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

4.9.3 The NPPF requires Local Plans to define a hierarchy of town centres, their boundaries and a Primary Shopping Area; the focus of main town centre uses. Emerging Local Plan Policy 67 (Managing Town Centres) responds to updates of the NPPF, defining Melksham a transitional market town centre and retaining "sequential testing" requirements of out of centre retail proposals.

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

Figure 10: Town Centre



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

4.9.6 The Melksham Town 2020 – 2036 Scoping Report²³ reviewed the opportunities, challenges and drivers facing Melksham Town over the period of the next Local Plan. This report highlights that though the climate for retail and customer-facing business in the town is seen as relatively good, and there has been improvement to the area in front of the Town Hall, no other recent improvement works have taken place.

4.9.7 Competition from other centres and changing retail trends means it is important that the town's vitality and viability is maintained and, where possible, improved. It is also important that Melksham town centre remains at the heart of the community of the Plan area, including its wider rural hinterland, as a destination not just for shopping, but also where current and future residents want to work, socialise and live.

4.9.8 A key part of the town's vitality is night-time activity and economy. Developments that positively enhance the night-time economy of the town would be supported, but care would be

needed to ensure the amenity of those living in the town centre is not negatively impacted.

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

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

23. [Melksham Town 2020 – 2036 Scoping Report, Melksham Town Council 2019](#) (link takes you to the Melksham Town Council website)



Employment Sites

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

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

Policy 10: Employment Sites

Proposals for the retention, intensification and reuse of previously developed employment land will be supported, particularly where they provide space for start-up and small businesses and introduce a range of new employment opportunities.

Except where sites are allocated for alternative uses by this Plan, development proposals should generate the same number, or more, permanent full time equivalent jobs as the existing or former use wherever this approach is practicable.

The reason for the policy

4.10.1 The [Wiltshire Employment Land and Workspace Review](#) (updated 2023) notes that the two largest employment sectors in the Melksham Community Area are manufacturing and wholesale/retail. The employment profile of the Neighbourhood Plan area has moved in recent years from an industrial economy, dominated by several large international employers, to a mixture of industrial, service and retail businesses.

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

4.10.3 Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 35 (Existing Employment Sites) defines Principal Employment Land and seeks to retain these and other employment land within similar employment levels.

4.10.4 Through Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 34 (Additional employment land), Wiltshire Council sets out support for proposals

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

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

4.10.6 The creation of use class E and MA has affected the delivery of Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 34 and 35. The emerging Local Plan seeks to reinforce and increase employment land at Melksham in conformity with new legislation and the NPPF. Emerging Local Plan Policy 65 (existing Employment Land) seeks ongoing retention of employment land at Bowerhill, south of Berryfield, adjacent to Melksham Station and Avonside Enterprise Park. But it enables the potential for some sites to change use. This may include consideration of new uses at the Cooper Tires site.

4.10.7 Emerging Local Plan Policy 64 (Additional Employment

Land) sets out the updated employment land strategy to balance employment and economic growth. It proposes 5 hectares of new employment land within the strategic allocation on land east of Melksham. Policy 64 is also supportive of employment development on unallocated sites adjacent to Melksham as a Market Town where they are appropriate to the role and function of the settlement and certain criteria are met.

4.10.8 Emerging Local Plan Policy 68 (Managing Town Centres) supports neighbourhood plans in producing local strategies and appropriate site allocations within and on the edge of town centres that would support the viability of the town centre. Neighbourhood plan proposed allocations at Cooper Tires and the former library site, together with the [Town Centre Master Plan Report](#), seek to address the delivery of this policy and enable new employment opportunities. Policy 10 seeks to address these various matters and recycle brownfield land for employment development. It advises that proposals should generate the same number, or more, permanent full time equivalent jobs as the existing or former use wherever this approach is practicable. Nevertheless, the Plan recognises that a flexible approach will be necessary on this matter throughout the Plan period. This acknowledges that proposals for high-value employment uses with different employment levels than the former uses may make an equal or greater contribution to the well-being of the neighbourhood area.

Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

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

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

Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should complement the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy, including provision for ultra-low emission vehicles. Proposals for major development should demonstrate through a proportionate Travel Plan how sustainable transport modes are maximised and that safe and suitable movement can be achieved for all people.

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

The reason for the policy

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

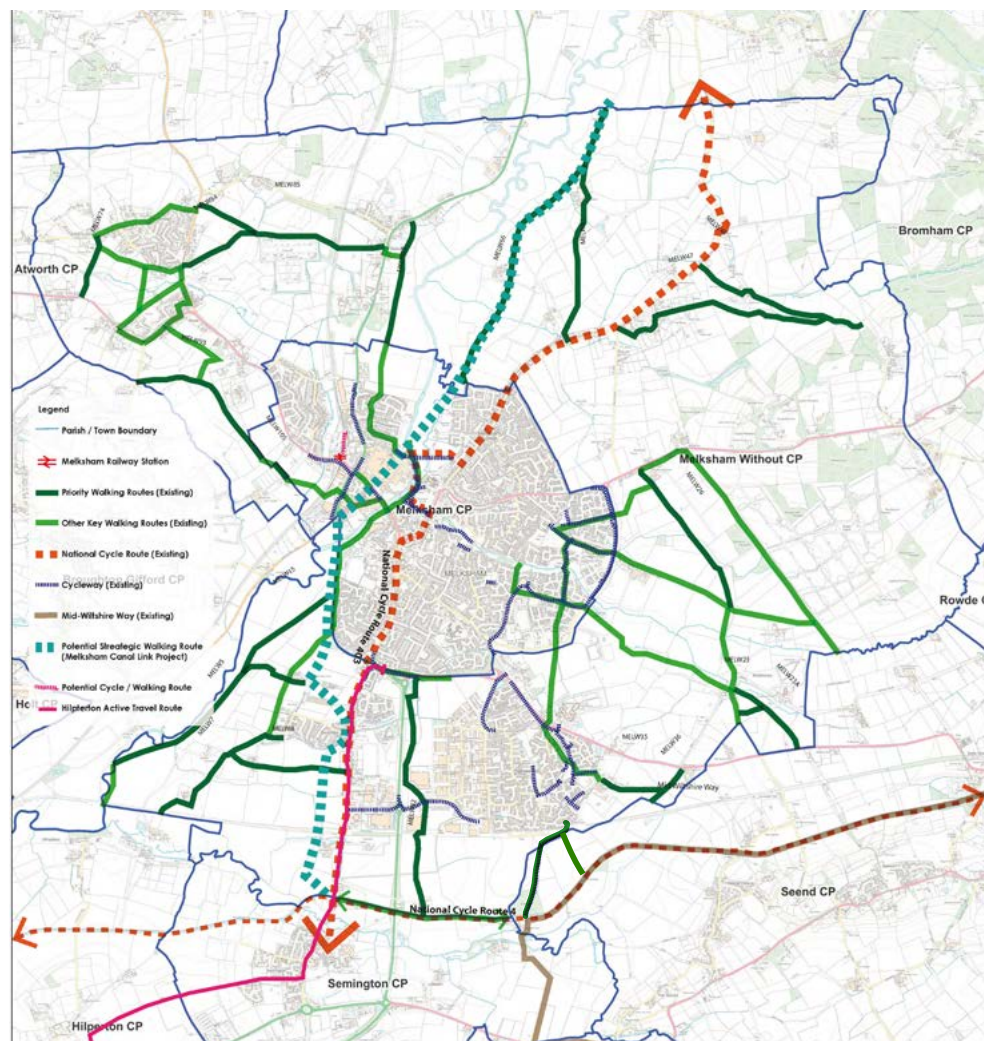
4.11.2 Increased levels of walking and cycling were seen across the UK during the pandemic. In May 2020 a £2 billion package to increase cycling and walking was introduced by the government²⁴.

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

- coherence
- directness
- safety
- comfort
- attractiveness

²⁴. [The details of the delivery of this fund are set out by the Department for Transport in a document titled Gear Change July 2020](#)

Figure 11: Key Routes for Walking and Wheeling



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Sustainable transport hierarchy

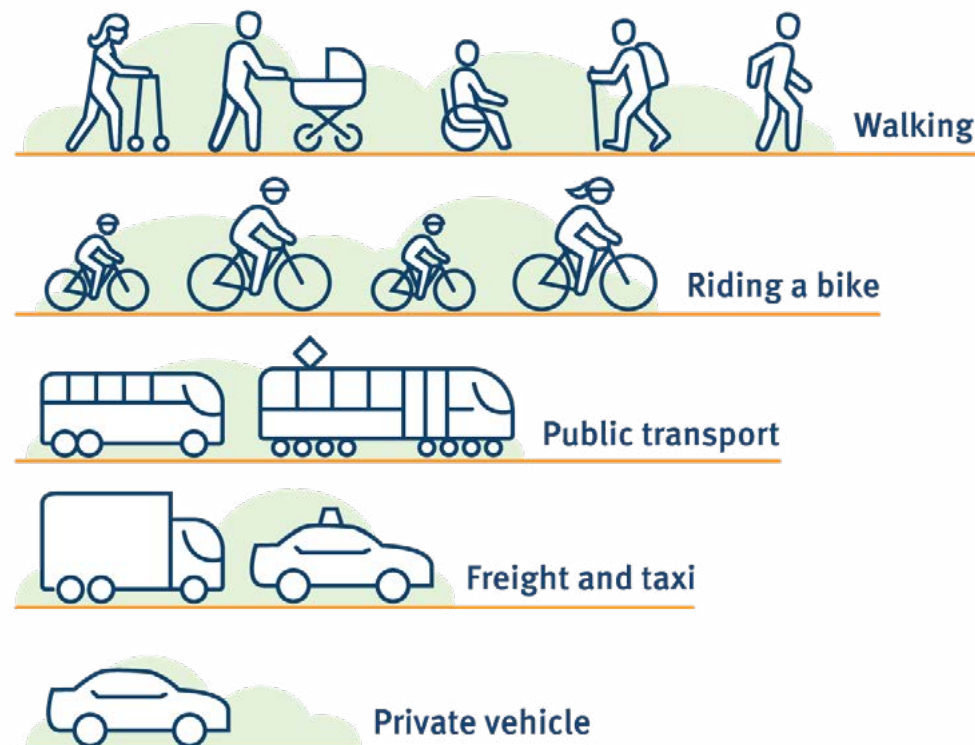


Image sourced from [kindpng.com](https://www.kindpng.com)



Public Transport

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

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

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

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

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

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

- a station café and toilet have been provided by conversion of existing buildings, and although currently closed, are key requirements to encourage train usage.
- Active train service information displays have been provided.
- Sufficient car parking and electric car charging for the next few years.

Continued on next page

Further enhancements are planned/desirable summarised as:

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

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

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



Community Well-being and Nature



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

Policies in this section:

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

Green and Blue Infrastructure

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

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

Policy 12: Green and Blue Infrastructure

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

2. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals for major developments must:

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

The reason for the policy

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

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

4.12.3 A diagrammatic representation of GBI assets and their connectivity potential is shown in figure 12 as identified in the GBI Evidence Base Report²⁵. The report identifies local elements of GBI with the aim of linking local sites and delivering connectivity of assets between and within different parts of the Plan area.

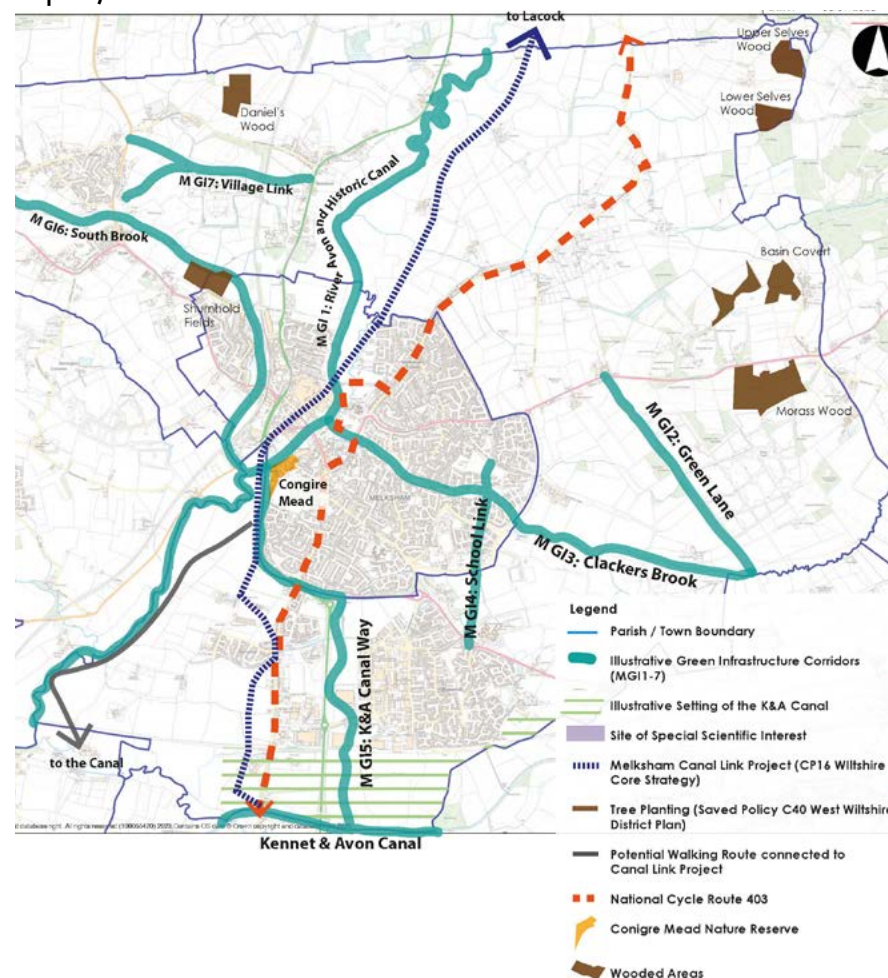
4.12.4 The GBI network has many and varied benefits for the environment, biodiversity and residents; it can contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities and local wildlife, and is an important part of our distinct local identity and part of what makes Melksham a good place to live.

25. [Available on the JMNP2 webpages.](#)

4.12.5 Since the first edition of the JMNP, Wiltshire Council's [Green and Blue Infrastructure \(GBI\) Strategy](#) was adopted in 2022 and provides an overarching strategy for up to 2030 to support the natural environment and the benefits it brings to our wildlife, communities and businesses. The Strategy sets out three overarching GBI goals: 1. Adaptation, mitigation and resilience to climate change; 2. Halting the loss of and improving biodiversity; 3. Contributing to health and wellbeing. The Strategy commits to the preparation of Settlement Frameworks in areas where future growth is expected, to support delivery of local projects. This Neighbourhood Plan will provide a basis from which to shape the Settlement Framework for our area.

4.12.6 The role of GBI is clearly a vital part of a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, the Parish and Town Councils therefore encourage developers to seek to achieve a Building with Nature accreditation²⁶. Building with Nature is a new framework of standards for delivering GI. It is divided into three core themes: wellbeing, water and wildlife. The aim is to enable the delivery of high quality green infrastructure at each stage of the development process, from planning and design, through to long-term management and maintenance.

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



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26. www.buildingwithnature.org.uk



Melksham Canal Link Project

A key priority for the Plan area GBI is the Melksham Link Project. The Wiltshire Core Strategy safeguards the route of the Melksham Link Canal in Core Policy 16. This policy safeguards the identified route (see Figure 12) for developing a canal link to the south west of the town between the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Avon, and to the north east of the town between the River Avon and the historic alignment of the Wilts & Berks Canal.

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

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

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

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

Biodiversity

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

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

Policy 13: Biodiversity

Development proposals, including those for field based solar farms, should deliver at least a 10% improvement in biodiversity value within and, where appropriate, beyond the site to deliver tangible benefits for biodiversity, including specific attention for protected species. Proposals which deliver a higher Biodiversity Net Gain will be particularly supported.

Where appropriate, development proposals should demonstrate sensitive responses to statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites (as shown on Figure 13), such as accommodating a buffer zone.

The reason for the policy

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

4.13.2 A full record of habitats and biodiversity information has been obtained from Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre, assembled using a mixture of field survey data and aerial photographic interpretation to compile a habitat inventory. This is available in full in the evidence base, and is summarised in the Green Infrastructure Report, which adds Neighbourhood Plan level information to the biodiversity data. The map on the next page shows wildlife sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Any development proposed within the 2km Lesser Horseshoe core area in the south eastern part of the neighbourhood area will need to comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, through compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire 2015 (or latest iteration). In addition, a project level Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) may be required.

4.13.3 Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) except for small sites, are required to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

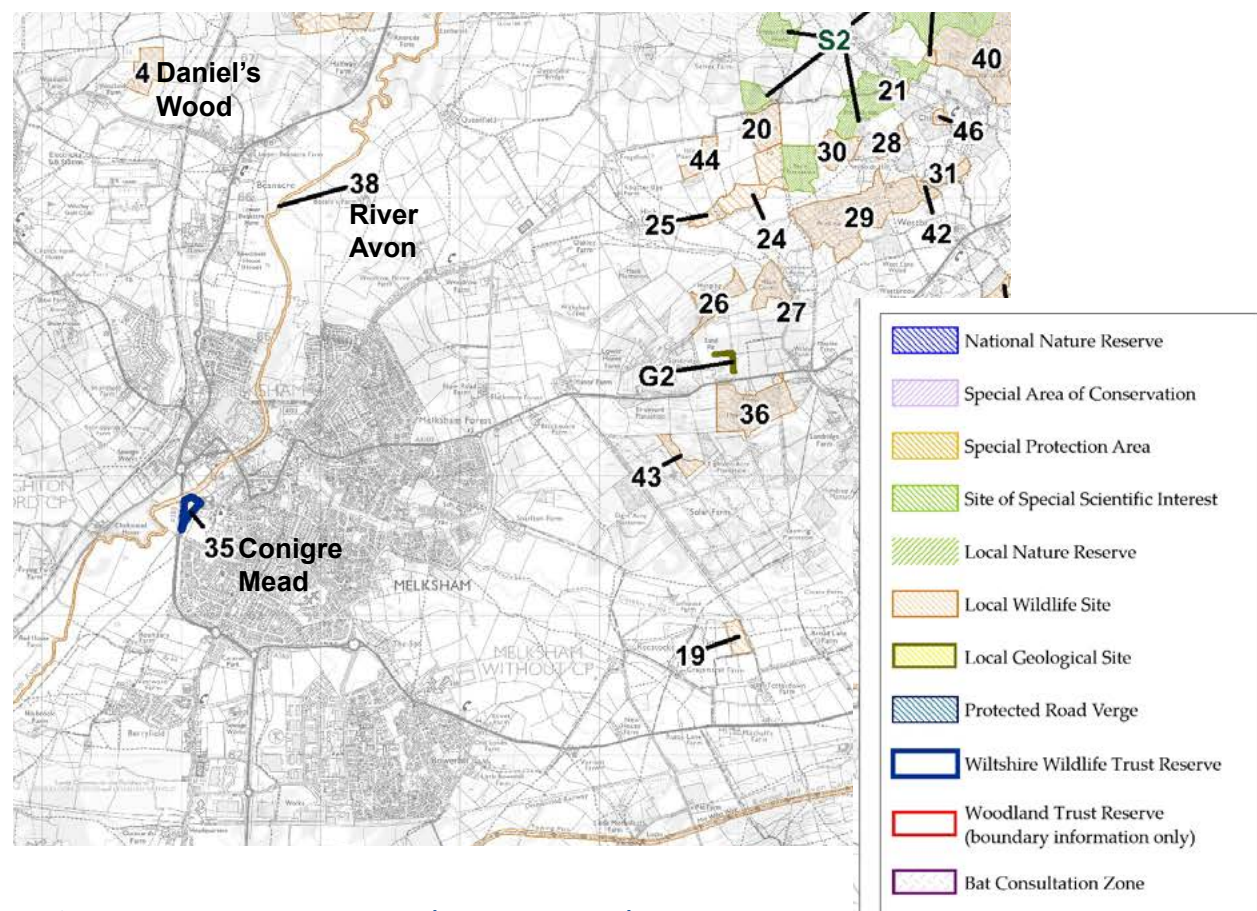
4.13.4 Net gain is an approach that uses the planning process to leave biodiversity in a better state than it was before the development started, securing wider benefits for people and the

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

environment, and is directly linked to the Government's aim in its 25 Year Environment Plan²⁷ to "leave the environment in a better state than we found it".

4.13.5 The Biodiversity Metric 4.0²⁸, is the current version of the statutory biodiversity metric tool from the Government. Minor applications and small-scale proposals, where applicable, should use the small sites version of the Metric. BNG delivery should also be in accordance with established good practice principles within Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development (CIEEM, CIRIA and IEMA) and BS 8683:2021 (and updates). Plainly the biodiversity metric may be updated in the Plan period. For the purposes of Policy 13 the most up-to-date version of the biodiversity metric should be used.

4.13.6 This ambition for improved levels of biodiversity again links to Building with Nature accreditation (see previous policy). In new development we expect to see wildlife features incorporated into the design of new dwellings to increase biodiversity.



27. [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment DEFRA January 2018](#)

28. [Tools and guides for measuring the biodiversity value of habitat for biodiversity net gain \(BNG\) available via this link.](#)

For more information on the annotations on this map, please refer to Appendix 3 of the Green Infrastructure Report

Open Spaces

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

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

Policy 14: Open Spaces

Development proposals that involve the whole or partial loss of an existing open space (other than the designated Local Green Spaces) should demonstrate through an assessment of open space provision, using the quantity and access standards for open space as set out by Wiltshire Council, that:

- a. there is a surplus in the catchment area of the open space concerned beyond that required to meet both current and forecast need, and full consideration has been given to all functions that the open space performs; or**
- b. a replacement open space (or an enhancement of the remainder of the existing site) provides a net benefit to the community in terms of the quantity, quality and accessibility of the open space including by walking and wheeling.**

The reason for the policy

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

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

4.14.3 The Green Space Index²⁹ is Fields in Trust's annual barometer of publicly accessible local park and green space provision. Other than Bowerhill, information from the Green Space Index in 2023 shows that our area does not meet the minimum standards of green space provision, though it also shows that there is generally good standard of access, with many people being within ten minutes walking distance of green spaces across the

29. [Available via the Fields in Trust website](#)

area including King George V Park, Conigre Mead Nature Area, together with many other parks and recreation grounds and play areas. New green spaces are needed to address this issue, the newest of which is a community field in between Whitley and Shaw, which will be a good addition to the local open space network and overall GBI infrastructure of the wider area.

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

4.14.5 Therefore we are keen to make sure that open spaces for play and recreation are created and / or invested in alongside housing development.

4.14.6 Financial contributions from developers will therefore be used for local community sports, play or pitch infrastructure and/or strategic priorities within the [Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy \(PPS\)](#) which is an evidence base within the local plan. PPS priorities/ options for Melksham are included in the action plan of the strategy, which was updated at the end of 2024. Need for 2 full size 3G Artificial Turf Pitches is identified.

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

Community Facilities

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

Policy 15: Community Facilities

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

The reason for the policy

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

4.15.2 The community facilities in the Plan area cover both rural and town areas. The existing community facilities in the Plan area as detailed in the Community Facilities Report³⁰ compiled by the Plan Steering Group are wide-ranging and can include community centres, public houses, cultural centres and venues, places of worship, education establishments and training centres and childcare facilities, health and social care facilities, sport and recreation facilities and civic and administrative facilities. However, the list and maps produced for the

30. [Available on the JMNP2 webpages.](#)

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

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

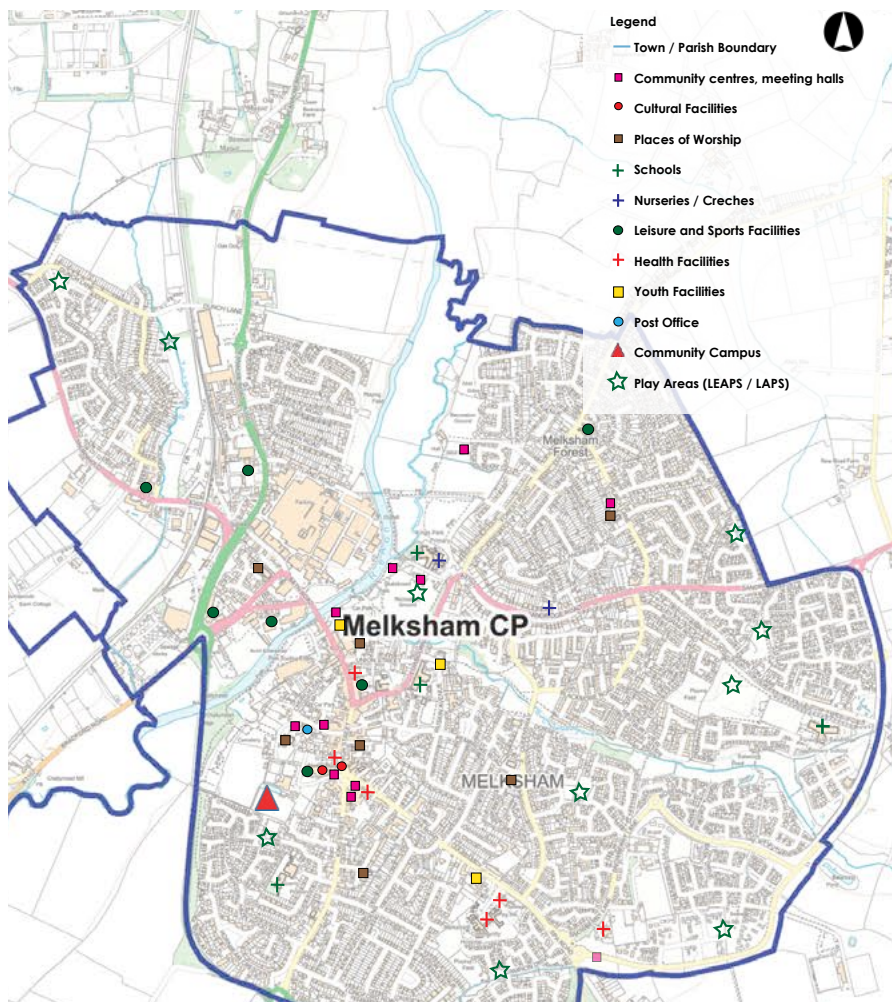
4.15.4 The primary function of some facilities is commercial (including pubs – a key facility in rural areas) but they also perform a clear role for the community in terms of sport, recreation or leisure provision.

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

4.15.6 Consultation illustrated how important community, health and leisure facilities are for the health and wellbeing of the people of Melksham and its wider community. As mentioned in the supporting text to the previous policy, financial contributions from developers are to be used for local community sports, play or pitch



Figure 14a: Melksham Town Community Facilities
(Source: [Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report](#))



infrastructure and/or strategic priorities within the most up-to-date Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

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

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

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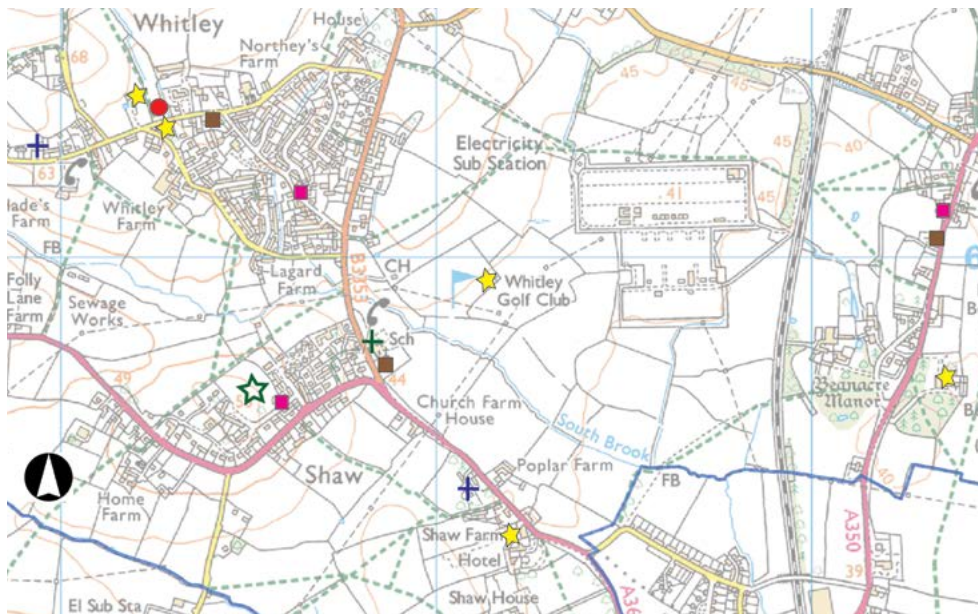


Figure 14b: Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre Community Facilities
(Source: [Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report](#))

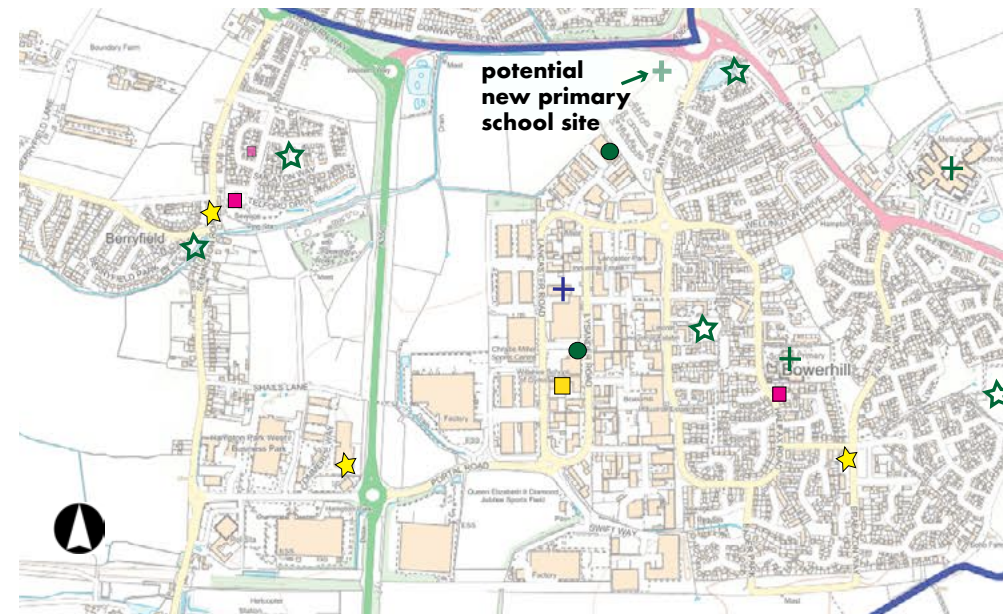


Figure 14c: Bowerhill and Berryfield Community Facilities
(Source: [Neighbourhood Plan Community Facilities Report](#))

Figures 14a, 14b and 14c not to scale, please refer to map on previous page for key and Community Facilities Report which can be found on the [Neighbourhood Plan website](#) for further information. One additional type of facility is noted in the rural areas – pubs denoted by a star ★ Maps can also be found on the [JMNP website as individual files](#).

Local Green Spaces

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

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

Policy 16: Designation of Local Green Spaces

The sites shown on figure 15, and listed on page 95, are designated as Local Green Spaces.

Development proposals within the identified LGSs will only be supported in very special circumstances.

The reason for the policy

4.16.1 The NPPF sets out the context for Local Green Space (LGS) designation which provides strong protection against development for green areas of particular importance to communities.

Paragraph 106 of the NPPF sets clear criteria that the designation should only be used where the space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) where the green area is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

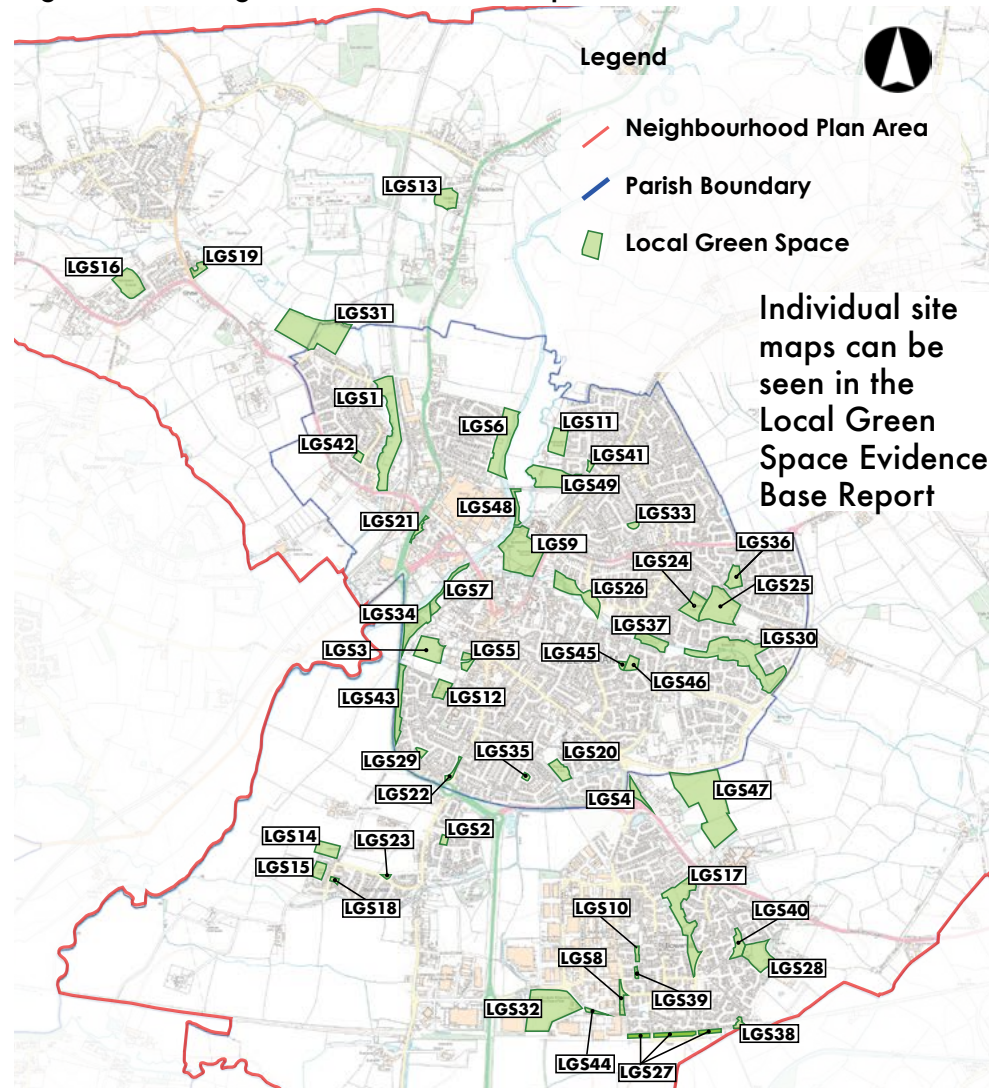
4.16.2 Interactive online community outreach to identify potential LGS nominations was undertaken during May and June 2022. This was supplemented by an opportunity to validate or add nominations at community drop-in events and online consultation during February and March 2023. From around 150 suggestions from the first community consultation, a working group assessed potential sites to determine which sites were considered to meet the criteria. The final proposed set here are informed by both community input and landowner feedback.

4.16.3 In various ways, these spaces provide quality of life benefits to our community, for example through encouraging recreation and providing space for being outside and connecting with nature.

4.16.4 It is recognised that not all development proposals on LGS will be 'inappropriate' and some development that enhances the beneficial use of LGS may be appropriate, such as provision of appropriate facilities. Proposals must set out how any impacts on the special qualities of the green space, as identified by its reason for designation, are protected.

4.16.5 A full explanation of the methodology, evidence and justification to support the designations, along with maps of each LGS can be found in the Local Green Spaces Evidence Base Report which can be found on the [Neighbourhood Plan website](#).

Figure 15: Designated Local Green Spaces



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Local Green Spaces

1. Land along Roundponds following South Brook
2. Bowood View
3. Cricket field to rear of The Campus
4. Copse area in The Spa
5. Approach to Melksham House
6. Riverside Drive Green/Woodland Areas
7. Natural woodland area near Sainsburys
8. Land between Duxford Close and the boundary of the industrial estate
9. King George V Playing Fields and recreation area
10. Beverley Close Greenspace
11. Forest Community Centre playing field/sports pitches
12. Hazelwood Road Play Area (Brunswick Park)
13. St Barnabas Church, Cricket Field
14. Berryfield Allotments North (Briansfield Allotments)
15. Berryfield Allotments South (Berryfield Allotments)
16. Shaw Playing Fields "The Beeches"
17. Rear of Grasmere and Wellington Drive
18. Green in Berryfield Lane
19. Shaw Churchyard
20. Old Sports Pitch / field (to rear of Campion Drive)
21. Weavers Crofts
22. Hornbeam Crescent/Semington Road
23. Berryfield Green triangle
24. Foresters Park Road playing fields
25. Cranesbill Road playing fields

26. Clackers Brook (Queensway)
27. Brabazon Way
28. Hornchurch Road Public Open Space
29. Hornbeam Crescent green
30. East of Melksham (Clackers Brook)
31. Shurnhold Fields
32. Bowerhill Sports Field
33. The Crays
34. Conigre Nature Reserve
35. Sarum Avenue
36. Skylark Green
37. Primrose Nature Reserve
38. Locking Close
39. Beaufort Close to Kestrel Court
40. Harvard Close
41. Awdry Avenue
42. Roundponds
43. Walkway parallel to A350 (rear of Hornbeam Crescent)
44. Verge with stream and trees (Swift Way, Bowerhill)
45. Dorset Crescent play area/green
46. Primrose Drive play area/green
47. Woolmore Farm Fields*
48. Riverside Walk (Melksham Green Space Group)
49. Murray Walk Field (Melksham Green Space Group)

Note: *previously named 'Dog Walking Area to the Rear of The Spa' [See the Local Green Space Evidence Base Report for detail on all these sites](#)

Natural, Built and Historic Environment



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

Policies in this section:

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

Trees and Hedgerows

This policy helps meet objective 15: Conserving and enhancing the quality of the natural landscape.

Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows

1. Ancient and Veteran Trees:

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

2. Other Existing Trees and Hedgerows:

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

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

3. Increased Tree Canopy:

Wherever practicable, development proposals on sites outside of the town centre, and greater than 0.5 ha in size, should deliver an increase in site tree canopy cover. This should be demonstrated through a tree planting plan, and should be delivered through the retention of existing trees and /or the planting of new trees in public areas and in private gardens. Where this approach is not practicable, other green infrastructure features (such as green roofs) appropriate to the site should be provided.

The reason for the policy

4.17.1 As part of a local response to climate change, place making and achieving local distinctiveness: In Shurnhold Fields, 200 trees planted for WW1 commemoration along with a native rare species orchard, and most recently the community in Shaw and Whitley planted trees. In Melksham town, another intensive residents tree planting scheme was carried out in November 2023. As set out in the Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report³⁰, trees are a key asset of the Plan area and there is practical action to increase tree coverage across the community.

4.17.2 Overall tree canopy coverage in the area is estimated to be an average of just over 12% which has been mapped using the i-tree canopy tool³¹. The Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Network recommends a minimum standard for tree canopy cover is set for a local area. On this basis, Policy 17 comments that wherever practicable, development proposals on sites outside of the town centre, and greater than 0.5 ha in size, should deliver an increase in site tree canopy cover.³²

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



The Importance of Trees

- Trees naturally absorb CO₂, a key greenhouse gas removing 4 million tonnes of it from the atmosphere every year.
- Local air quality is improved as trees cut the level of airborne particulates and absorb nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone
- Nearby trees and greenspaces can increase property value of 15 – 18%. The larger the trees the greater their proportional value.
- Tree cover across England is 12.8%, of which 10% is woodland.
- The Woodland Trust recommend an increase in UK woodland as part of the way to tackle biodiversity and climate crises.
- Existing tree cover is being mapped as part of the approach to increasing tree cover. Friends of the Earth also advocate that planting more street trees, forests and hedgerows is one of the best solutions to protect our environment and achieve net zero. See their [website for an "opportunity map" of areas in England that may be suitable for creating woodlands](#) – this includes areas in Melksham and Melksham Without.

30. [Available on the JMNP2 webpages.](#)

31. [Doick et al \(2017\), England's Canopy Cover supported by Forestry Commission England, University of Southampton, Treeconomics and Wycombe District Council](#)

32. <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/i-tree-eco/uk-urban-canopy-cover/>

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

4.17.6 Hedgerows, like trees, can make an important contribution to the character and can also be important historically as indications of land use and previous ownership. They also contribute significantly to biodiversity and amenity value of the natural and, in places, built environment.

Below: Bristol Tree Replacement Standard (BTRS) Methodology

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

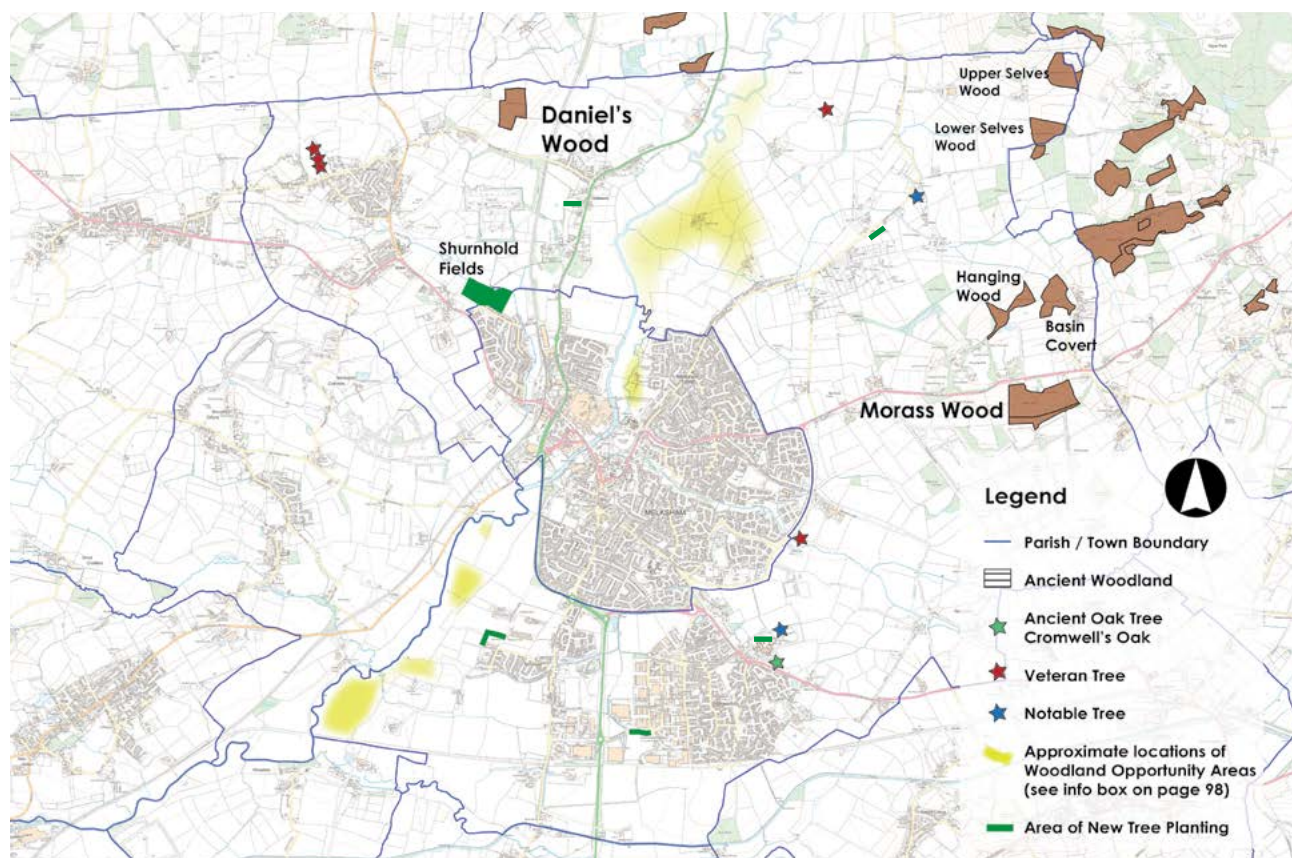
4.17.6 Where tree loss is unavoidable, the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard can be used to inform the number of replacement trees based on the size of the lost tree. Whilst a particular site or design approach to trees will inform the number and approach to tree planting, the Standard is a established methodology used by Bristol City Council³³ and has also been successfully integrated in Neighbourhood Plans with Cam Parish and Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan.



33. [More detail can be found in the Bristol City Council Planning Obligations SPD](#)

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

Please note - this map is a snapshot in time. The Woodland Trust maintain a live online map that serves as an inventory of the oldest and most important trees in the UK. This should be referred to for the most up-to-date information on ancient, veteran and notable trees. [Website can be accessed here.](#)



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Landscape Character

This policy helps meet meet objective 14: Protecting settlements' rural setting and countryside gaps across the plan area **and objective 15:** Conserving and enhancing the quality of the natural landscape.

Policy 18: Landscape Character

As appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, development proposals will be expected to:

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

The reason for the policy

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



Bridge across the River Avon

4.18.2 The landscape within the Plan area is diverse in character ranging from areas of flat and low lying land with a general sense of openness, to areas that are much more enclosed with lines of trees along the River Avon. As the land rises to the north east there is an area that was once designated in the West Wiltshire Local Plan as a 'Special Landscape Area'. This designation is currently saved by the Wiltshire Core Strategy, but is not proposed to be retained in the emerging Local Plan.

4.18.3 Key characteristics of the landscape of the Plan area are detailed in the Green Infrastructure Report³⁴ and the Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report³⁵ which supplements Landscape Character Assessment work done by Wiltshire Council with local detail. Some key points are:

- The landscape around the River Avon forms a wedge of landscape into Melksham town running in between areas of housing (Riverside Drive to the west and Forest to the east) and from the south as far as the town bridge taking in the Conigre Mead nature reserve from where it spreads out again into the Melksham Without Parish towards the edges of Berryfield.
- Houses from Methuen Avenue, in the Forest area, on the east of this character area, and houses from Riverside Drive on the west, front out onto accessible greenspace (allotments from Methuen Avenue), providing an active frontage and connection to the landscape of the River Avon.

- Brooks and stream corridors are scattered across the landscape, for example Clackers Brook which, like the River Avon, forms a key area of natural green space and landscape, also making a link and connection with the built environment of the town. South Brook to the north west, meanders through agricultural fields between the two villages of Shaw and Whitley, contributing to the separate identity and character of the two villages and to local amenity, with a number of footpaths criss-crossing the area.

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

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

34. [Available on the JMNP2 evidence webpages.](#)

35. [Available on the JMNP2 evidence webpages.](#)

Separation of Settlements

This policy helps meet objective 14: Protecting settlements' rural setting and countryside gaps across the Plan area.

Policy 19: Separation of Settlements

1. Development proposals should respect the separation between the following settlements:

- Whitley and Shaw;
- Shaw and Melksham;
- Beanacre and Melksham; and
- Berryfield and Semington.

2. Proposals for development between the settlements listed above should:

a. be in conformity with development plan policies;

b. demonstrate that they would deliver economic, community and/or environmental benefits which would outweigh any harm to the role and function of the area between the two settlements (individually or cumulatively) as set out in section 1 of this policy, and as detailed in the Green Gap and Wedge Study (2023);

c. minimise and mitigate their urbanising effects, such as artificial lighting and traffic movements; and

d. where practicable, retain trees and hedgerows and, as appropriate to their scale and nature, incorporate additional screening trees and hedgerows as edge features to minimise the impact of development on the separation of the settlements concerned.

Development proposals which would result in the loss of, or an unacceptable reduction of the contribution which it makes to the separation of the settlements concerned will not be supported.

The reason for the policy

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

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

4.19.3 Wiltshire Council, through the [Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment \(SHELAA\)](#) provides information on a range of potential housing sites and sites for other uses, which gives an indication of how development requirements

could potentially be met on the ground. The SHELAA and a separate Call for Sites carried out by the Steering Group of the Neighbourhood Plan to inform this update of the Plan, clearly indicate that land continues to be promoted for development in locations where coalescence could result if development were consented.

4.19.4 As more development is accommodated in the neighbourhood area, the identification of areas of countryside outside settlement boundaries as areas of separation can help prevent (further) erosion of local character and identity arising from 'coalescence' or the merging together of places that were once separate. However, the need to balance appropriate sustainable land uses on the edge of settlements over the Plan



What is the SHELAA?

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

period is acknowledged. For example, the emerging Local Plan allows for new community facilities (Policy 81) and employment development (Policy 64) adjacent to settlement boundaries where certain criteria are met. In the neighbourhood area, the need to balance any development (along with the benefits it will provide) on the settlement edge, with the issue of ensuring the ongoing separation of settlements, should be balanced by decision makers.

4.19.5 A Green Gap and Wedge Study³⁶ undertaken as part of the evidence base to JMNP2, sets out landscape evidence to illustrate that Shaw, Whitley, Beanacre, Bowerhill, Berryfield and Melksham town each retain a unique character, history and sense of place derived from their landscape settings as recognisably distinct built-up areas, distinguishable from other neighbouring settlements by intervening countryside.

4.19.6 The Green Gap and Wedge Study illustrates that the areas between the settlements identified in Policy 19 have been assessed as meeting three separate criteria and found to provide physical and perceptual separation between settlements in the neighbourhood area.

4.19.7 An addendum³⁷ to the Study has also been prepared with an update to information about a possible Green Wedge (Berryfield, Bowerhill and Melksham), that no longer fulfils designation criteria due to outline planning permission being

granted at appeal, and amendment to another (Melksham and Berryfield), also as result of outline planning permission being granted at appeal. Following the examination of the Plan, the Melksham and Berryfield area is no longer identified in the policy.

4.19.8 The separation between Berryfield and Semington satisfies criteria 1 and 2 of the Green Gap and Green Wedge Study, albeit that it extends outside of the Plan boundary. The southern extent of the separation between the two settlements follows a clear landscape feature of high sensitivity – the Kennet and Avon Canal, which is also the parish boundary between Melksham Without and Semington. The policy applies only in the neighbourhood area, rather than the village of Semington. This acknowledges that a neighbourhood plan can only include land within the designated neighbourhood area.

4.19.9 The Kennet and Avon Canal is an important landscape and physical feature of both Melksham Without and Semington Parish. Co-ordinated work between the Semington Neighbourhood Plan, and this Plan has taken place given the overlapping nature of some of the two sets of policies.

36. [*Green Gap & Wedge Study, 2023, Aecom/Iceni Projects for JMNP2 available on the JMNP2 evidence webpages*](#)

37. [*Available on the JMNP2 evidence webpages.*](#)

Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

This policy helps meet objective 16: Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to our built heritage and the character of the area, with high standards of design.

Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Development proposals should contribute positively to the conservation, enhancement and extension of the quality and local distinctiveness of the neighbourhood area.

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

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

The reason for the policy

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

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

4.20.3 Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council recognise the importance of design quality to local distinctiveness and quality of life. In addition to expecting development proposals to respond positively to national design guidance and be in conformity with the adopted Wiltshire Local Plan Design Policies and Guidance (the Wiltshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document was formally adopted by Wiltshire Council on 25th March 2024), the Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure development in the Plan area is designed to

complement and strengthen local quality of place, character and distinctiveness.

4.20.4 The second Neighbourhood Plan is therefore now supported by the Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes Document³⁸. Those proposing or assessing any development should use this resource to inform the design of schemes or assessment feedback. Figure 18 illustrates the different character areas found in the Plan area, and detailed in the Document.

4.20.5 Part 12 of NPPF sets out the importance of achieving well-designed places. It also sets out the role of communities in achieving 'good design': "Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics".

4.20.6 In 2019 the Government published a '[National Design Guide](#)' which highlights the importance of understanding and responding to local character (in many senses). Figure 18 illustrates the 10 components of good design as set out in the National Design Guide. The importance of design is also underscored by the summer of 2020 update of Building for Life 12, an industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods: [Building for a Healthy Life \(BHL\)](#).



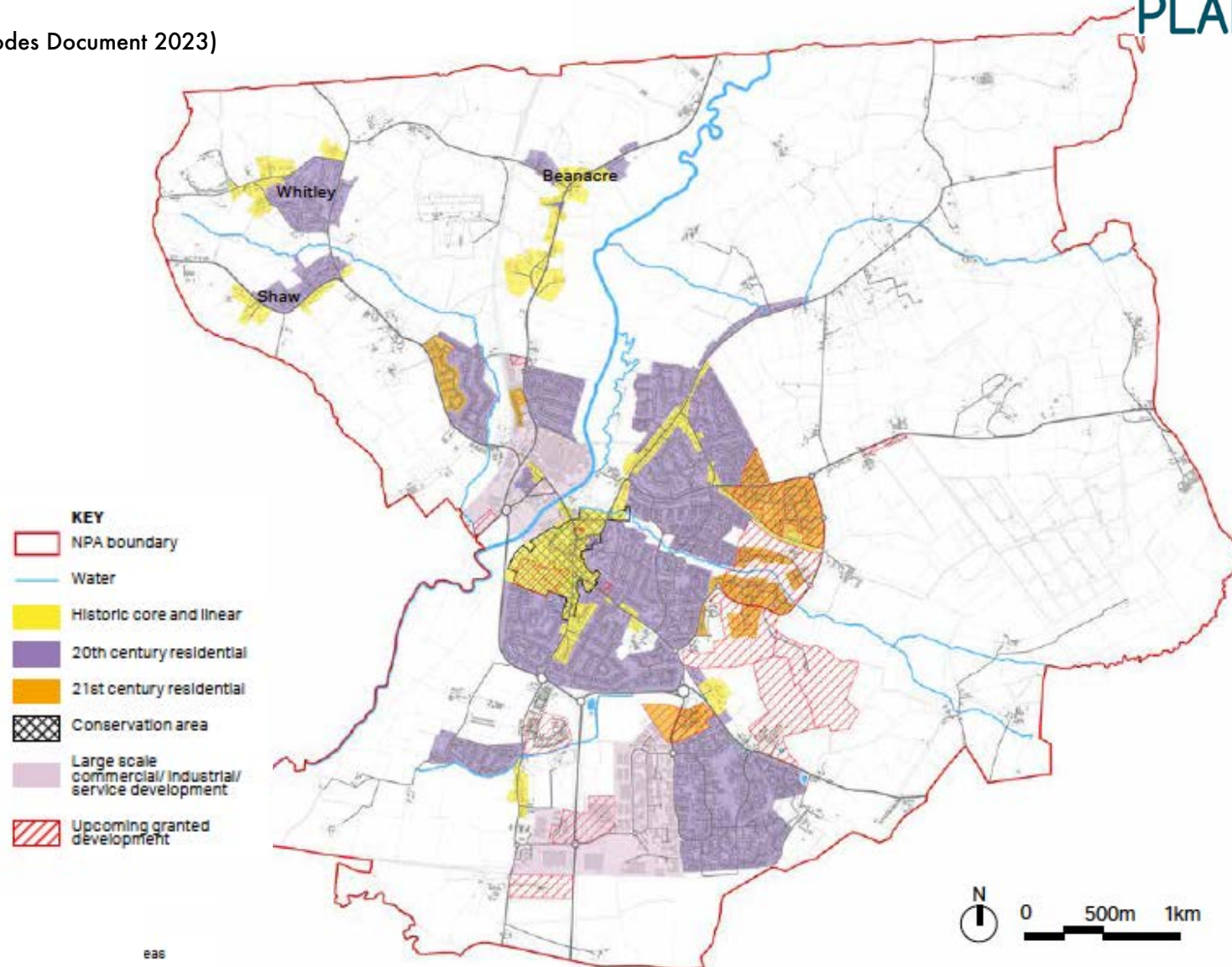
Figure 17: 10 components of good design (MHCLG 2019)

38. [Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes, 2023, Aecom for JMNP2](#)



Figure 18: Character Areas

(source: Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes Document 2023)



Local Heritage

This policy helps meet objective 16: Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to our built heritage and the character of the area, with high standards of design.

Policy 21: Local Heritage

Proposals for development within the Melksham Conservation Area must show how they preserve or enhance the setting, characteristics and special qualities that make up the architectural and historic character.

For other assets of local heritage importance, including archaeological importance, and buildings or structures identified as Non-designated Heritage Assets (as set out in the [2023 Locally Valued Non-designated Heritage Asset Report](#) or subsequent updates), mapped on Figure 19 (including notable buildings as shown on Figure 20) development proposals should demonstrate that appropriate consideration has been given to:

- a. the significance of the heritage asset;
- b. its most distinctive and important features;
- c. the elements of its setting and immediate surrounds that contribute to its significance, and
- d. the contribution the asset and its setting makes to the character of the local area (whether in a Conservation Area or not).
- e. any planning application must not only consider heritage issues but show that they have been fully taken into account via a heritage statement. Archaeological surveys of a particular site may also be required prior to the determination of an application.

The reason for the policy

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

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

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

4.21.4 The area of housing for industrial workers known as 'The City' is likely to date from the 17th Century when the town expanded to the north of the river for the first time. A few buildings

still survive in this area, including a Grade II listed former pub (The Red Lion), and a row of attached cottages built in early 18th century of rubblestone, with a stone slate roof. It is a fragmented area of heritage that survives alongside the Cooper Tires site, recent housing developments and the A350 relief road (that pedestrians and cyclists cross by an underpass).

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

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

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

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

4.21.9 Nominations that were put forward were assessed using Historic England criteria set out in [Advice Note 7 Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage](#). From time to time additional heritage assets may be identified and the locally Valued Non-designated Heritage Assets list will be updated, in which case Policy 21 will apply to an updated version of the list.

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

Locally Valued Non-Designated Heritage Assets List (see [Locally Valued Non-designated Heritage Asset Report](#) for detail)

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

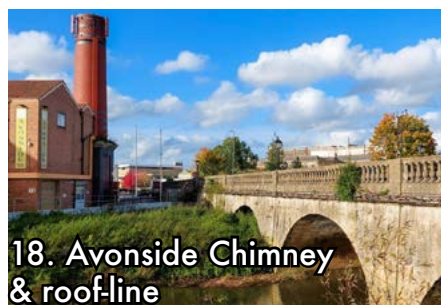
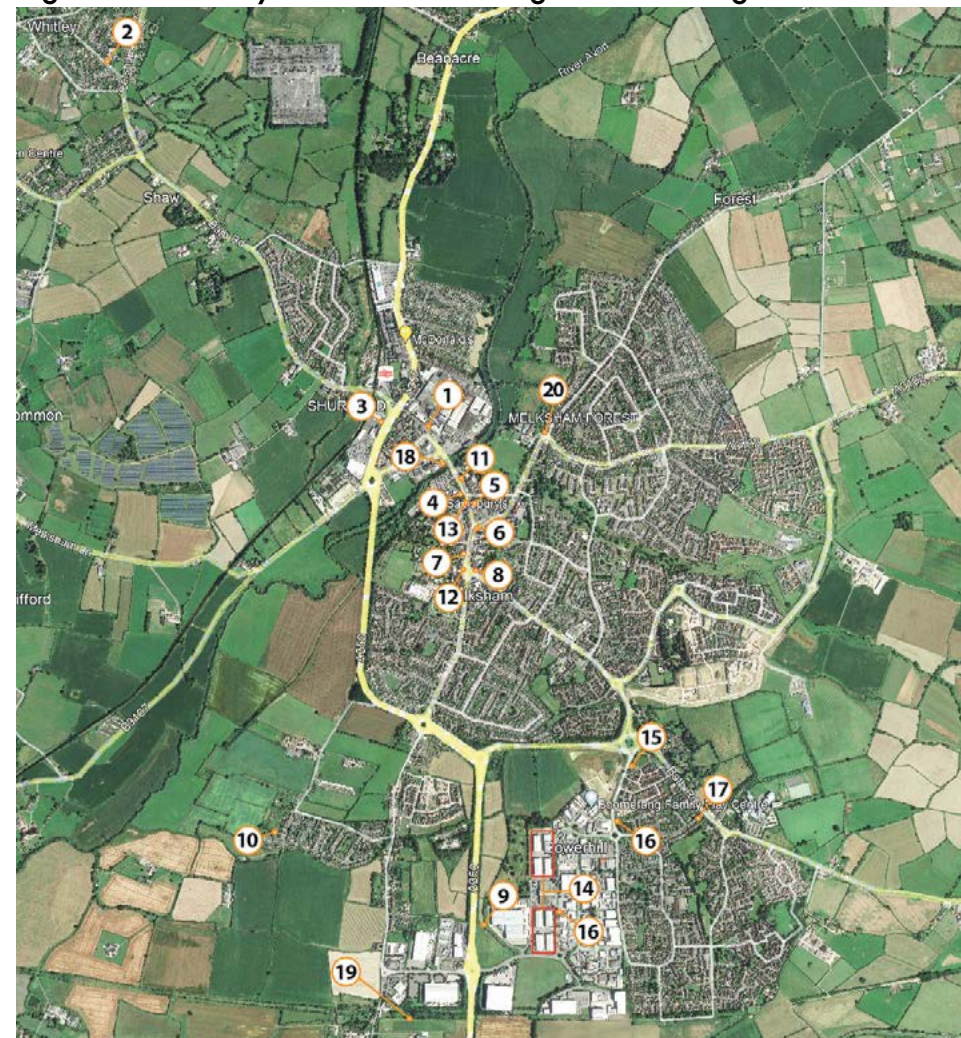
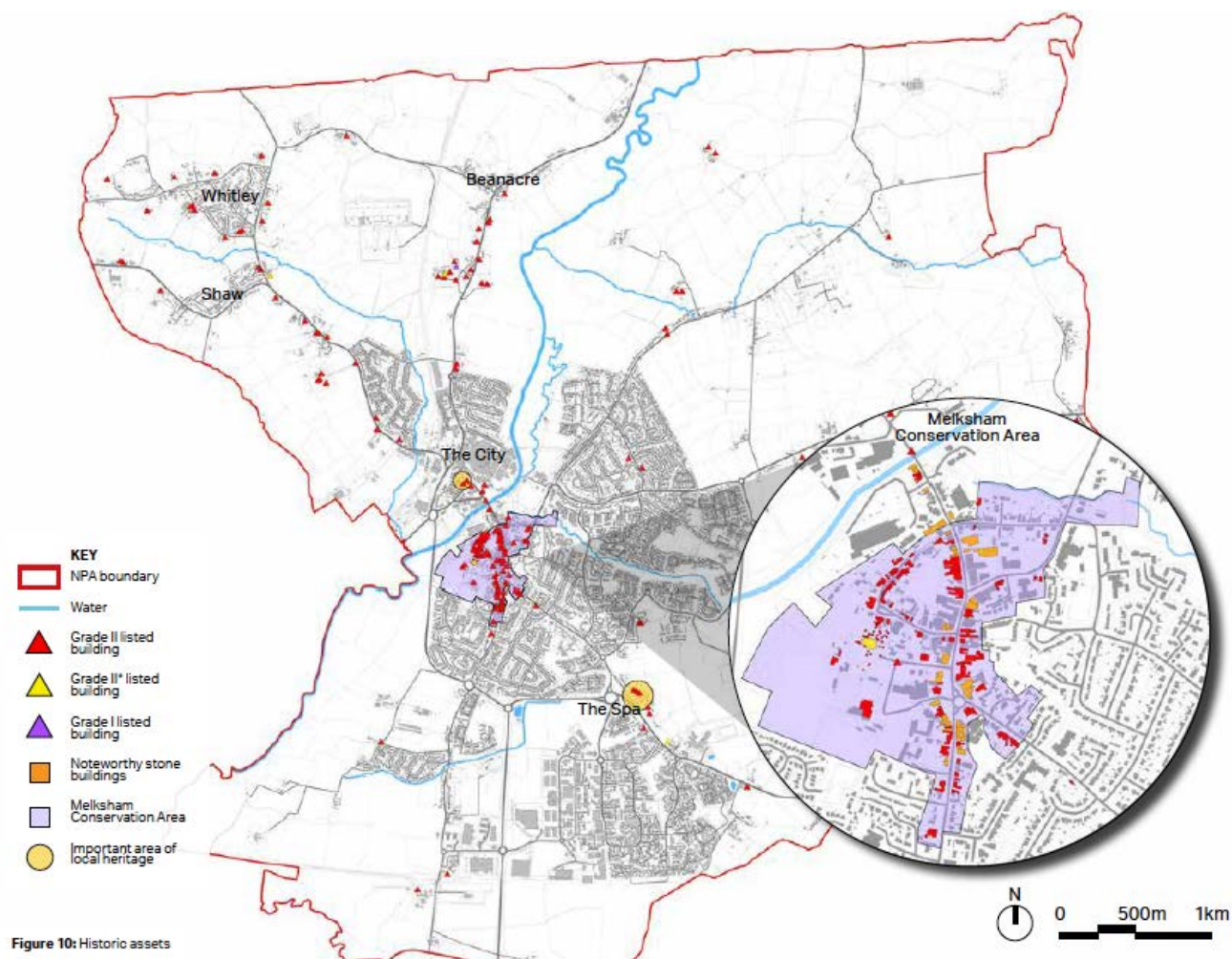


Figure 19: Locally Valued Non-Designated Heritage Assets



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

Figure 20: Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, Notable Buildings and Important Areas of Local Heritage
(source: Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes)



5 Priority Statements



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

Priority Statement 1: Transport Infrastructure – Bypass

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

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

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

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

Priority Statement 2 : Levels of Growth and Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

Memorandum of Agreement

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

Priority Statement 3: Wilts & Berks Canal Restoration

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

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

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

Priority Statement 4: Progressing Town Centre Master Plan Area Regeneration

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

- Cluster 1 The Campus and Market Place Civic and Cultural Quarter
- Cluster 2 The Old Library, Labour Club and Lowbourne area
- Cluster 3 Avon Riverside, Cooper Tires, The City and the

Railway Station

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

Brownfield land: See previously developed land

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

Development plan: This includes documents that form part of the adopted Local Plan and in the Melksham Area, the Neighbourhood Plan and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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

Ecological networks: These link sites of biodiversity importance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework.

The overall planning policy produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications. The NPPF was introduced in 2012 and subsequently updated in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. The NPPF is the principal element of national planning policy.

NPPG or PPG: Planning Practice Guidance.

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

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

Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres) leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

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

Major Development: A major development is any application that involves:

- mineral extraction
- waste development
- the provision of 10 dwellings or more
- a site area of over 0.5 hectare and the number of dwellings is not known.
- floorspace of over 1,000sqm or a site area of one hectare

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

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

Previously developed land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill.

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

- appearance – aspects of a building or place which affect the way it looks, including the exterior of the development
- means of access – covers accessibility for all routes to and within the site

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

Sequential Test (Town Centre): The Sequential Test ensures that a sequential approach is followed to steer new development to areas in the most sustainable location. This requires that applications for main town centre uses (e.g. shops) should be located in town centre locations. If that is not possible, then they should be located in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not be available should out of centre sites be considered.

SHELAA: The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is a process that is carried out by Wiltshire Council to find possible land for development.

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

Wheeling: A term to cover various modes of travel (non car) that use wheels, such as scooters or bicycles.

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

Appendix 1

Community Engagement Protocol



Introduction

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

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

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

Context

National

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

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

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

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

Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

2020 states that it encourages:

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

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

Process

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

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

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

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

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

- **'Day One' contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with the relevant Council, and through us with our local community, at the earliest possible point in the process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive. See the end of this Protocol for contact details

for the Town and Parish Councils. Wiltshire Council are also asked by the Town and Parish Councils to pass on contact details to applicants.

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

the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).

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

Contact Details

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

towncouncil@melksham-tc.gov.uk

clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk

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

Additional Notes

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

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

Appendix 2 Evidence Base Summary



Neighbourhood Area Level Evidence

Prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan

- Site Options and Assessment Report (2023 Aecom)
- Viability opinion - Cooper Tires, former Library, Whitley Farm sites (2024 Bailey Venning Associates)
- Addendum to Viability opinion - Cooper Tires (additional scenarios) (2024 Bailey Venning Associates)
- Appendices to Addendum to Viability opinion - Cooper Tires (additional scenarios) (2024 Bailey Venning Associates)
- Cooper Tires Initial Site Capacity Assessment (2024 AKU)
- Site Allocation Topic Paper (2024 Place Studio)
- Melksham Design Guide and Code (2023 Aecom)
- Local Green Space Report (2023 JMNP2)
- Green Gap & Wedge Study (2023 Aecom/Iceni Projects)
- Green Gap & Wedge Study Addendum (2024 JMNP2)
- Locally Valued Heritage Assets (2023 JMNP2)
- Town Centre Masterplan (2023 Aecom)
- Melksham Town Centre Car Parking Study (2024 AECOM)
- Housing Needs Assessment (2023 Aecom)
- Community Facilities Evidence Base Report (2020/Minor update 2023 JMNP2)
- Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report (2020/Minor Update 2023 JMNP2)
- Local Landscape Character Evidence Base Report (2020 JMNP1)

- Housing Need Assessment (AECOM, 2022)
- Points of the Compass Appraisal (AECOM, 2017)
- Heritage Assessment (Policy 7.3 Allocation of Land at Whitley Farm) (John Davey, 2020)
- Town and Parish Pre-application Protocol (see Appendix 1)
- Consultation Statement (2024 JMNP)
- Basic Conditions Statement (2024 Place Studio)
- Modification Statement (2024 Place Studio)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Reports (2024 Aecom)

All are [available on the JMNP2 evidence webpages](#).

JMNP2 also references other relevant evidence base material from sources such as Wiltshire Council. These are referenced throughout the Neighbourhood Plan.



MELKSHAM

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN