

Planning For Amesbury

July 2023

1. Introduction

‘Planning for Amesbury’ is a guide to how the Local Plan Review (‘the Plan’), which will replace the Wiltshire Core Strategy, will affect the town over the coming years. It sets out the evidence and processes that have informed the policies of the Plan that relate to Amesbury, as follows:

Policy	Title
36	Amesbury Market Town Incl. Principal Employment Areas
37	Boscombe Down
38	Porton Down

The Plan sets out what local priorities will shape development and future growth in Amesbury (‘place shaping priorities’). They include taking opportunities to improve the town for the local community and protect important assets. The Plan also sets a scale of growth, as part of a wider spatial strategy for Wiltshire, by which the town will expand over the plan period (2020-2038). This is expressed in additional homes and land for new businesses. It then identifies land to be built on not just for new homes and business, but also for supporting infrastructure.

This document explains the context and rationale for these decisions. It summarises what significant change has taken place recently, what protections and constraints upon growth will continue and what is already set to take place. Local priorities need to be seen in this context. Shaping the town’s future, to help deliver these priorities, this document explains what role growth will play; the development strategy; the direction for the town centre; and how the Plan supports the services and facilities the community requires. Altogether it tells how the Plan moves forward the existing planning framework for the town to meet fresh challenges and additional needs.

This document therefore combines many strands of evidence gathered over the preparation of the Plan. It pulls together the comments and advice received from, amongst others, local residents, landowners, business and service providers who also influenced the Plan content through consultation. All this information is available to read and is referenced so this further detail can also be examined.

2. Amesbury - Context and challenges

Population	13,000 ¹	11 th largest of the county's 16 main settlements
Strategic role	Market Town	Potential for significant development to help sustain, and where necessary enhance, their services and facilities, promoting better levels of self-containment and viable sustainable communities

Environment

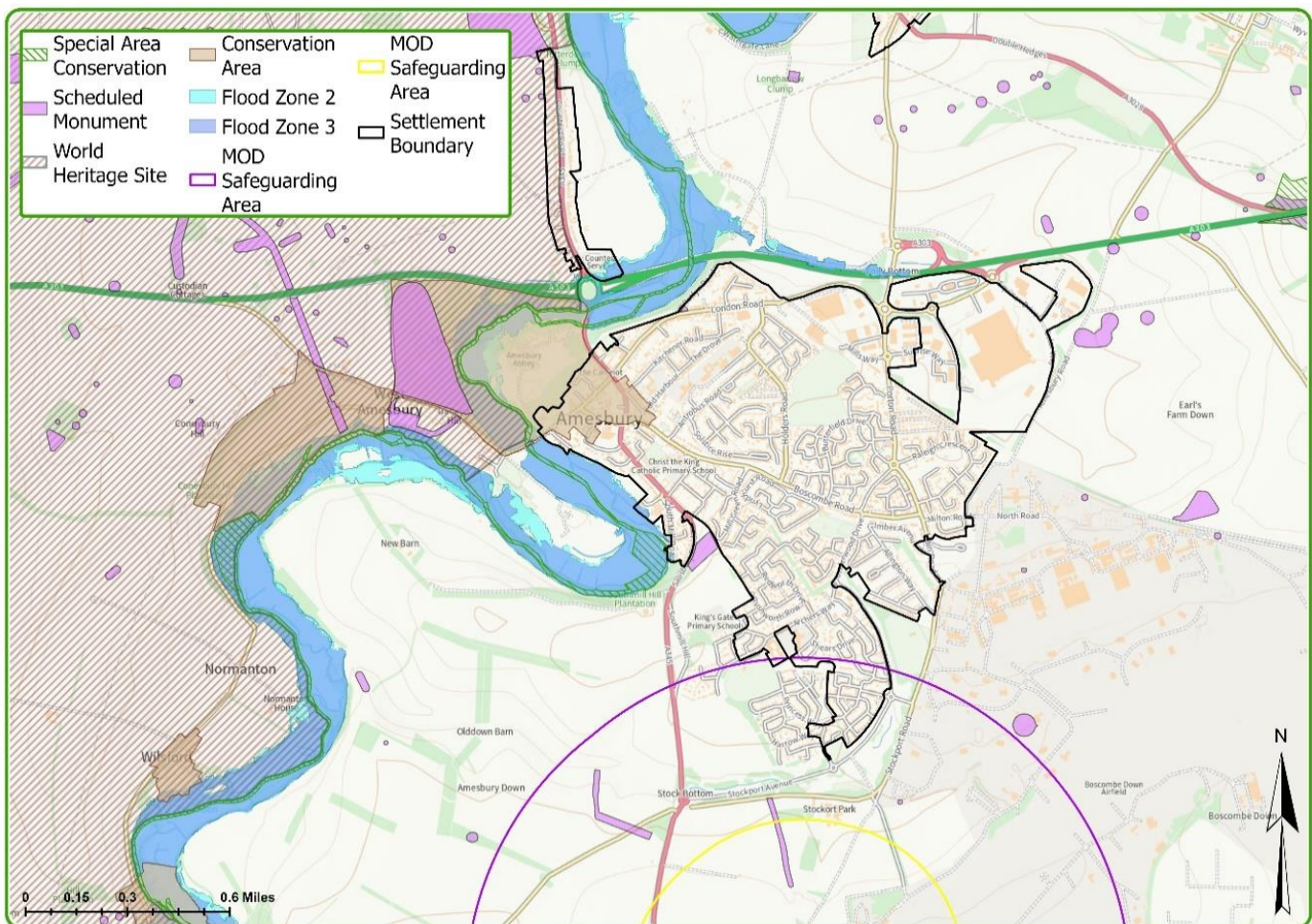


Figure 1. Environmental constraints and designations in Amesbury.

Amesbury is situated to the south-east of the county, south of Salisbury Plain which is a large military training area. The town is located on the A303 which serves as a major arterial route from London to the south-west. The town is set within an ancient and archaeologically rich landscape, close to the UNESCO of Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site to the west.

¹ [Census 2021, ONS](#)

Expansion of the settlement must conserve the character and qualities of the ancient landscape.

The town is flanked by the River Avon which flows to the west of the settlement and onward towards Salisbury. The River Avon is ecologically significant being designated both a Special Conservation Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest. Areas of flood risk also surround the river corridor, along with areas of priority habitat. The River Avon has significant potential as a Green and Blue Infrastructure asset for the town, along with its historic significance in the wider Stonehenge landscape.

The town centre is located to the northwest of the built area of the settlement, lying partly within a conservation area containing numerous listed buildings. Amesbury town centre provides an attractive and important service role function that supports both Amesbury town and the settlements within its rural hinterland. Amesbury's role as an important Market Town should be preserved and improved, wherever possible, with opportunities to improve the quality and legibility of the public realm. There may be opportunities to further capitalise on the town's unique advantage of being the closest large settlement to Stonehenge.

Along with its proximity to the A303, the A345 also passes through the town. There are records of congestion in the town centre, and pressure on key junctions. Development at the town should not increase these conditions.

Boscombe Down

The southeast of Amesbury adjoins Boscombe Down aerodrome which is a nationally significant military aircraft testing site. The 300ha site belongs to Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and is operated by QinetiQ on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. Boscombe Down is a major employer in the local area, making an important contribution to South Wiltshire's economy.

Land around the aerodrome is subject to various statutory safeguarding zones and restrictions applied by DIO, including building height / light restrictions, bird strike management areas, separation zones from communications infrastructure, and explosives safeguarding zones. Land free of obstacles for 'forced landings' around the airfield is also important for the aerodrome. The need to preserve the operational capabilities of activities at Boscombe Down is an important consideration for plan-making in and around Amesbury.

Porton Down

Porton Down is situated approximately 5 miles from Amesbury, close to the village of Porton. It is an internationally important centre for scientific research and development. It is strategically important site for a growing scientific research capacity in the UK and is located close to Salisbury and Amesbury. The main occupiers at Porton Down are DSTL, UKHSA and Porton Science Park (operated by Wiltshire Council).

High Post

High Post is one of Wiltshire’s Principal Employment Areas located on A345, the main route between Amesbury and the nearby city of Salisbury. A range of users occupy the High Post site, including commerce /industry, a petrol filling station and The Stones hotel. The site is on high ground with views across the surrounding landscape and to Old Sarum scheduled monument, with a close relationship to a golf course to the east and a the Chemring factory to the west.

The map below shows Amesbury in relation to the key employment clusters at Boscombe Down, Porton Down and High Post.

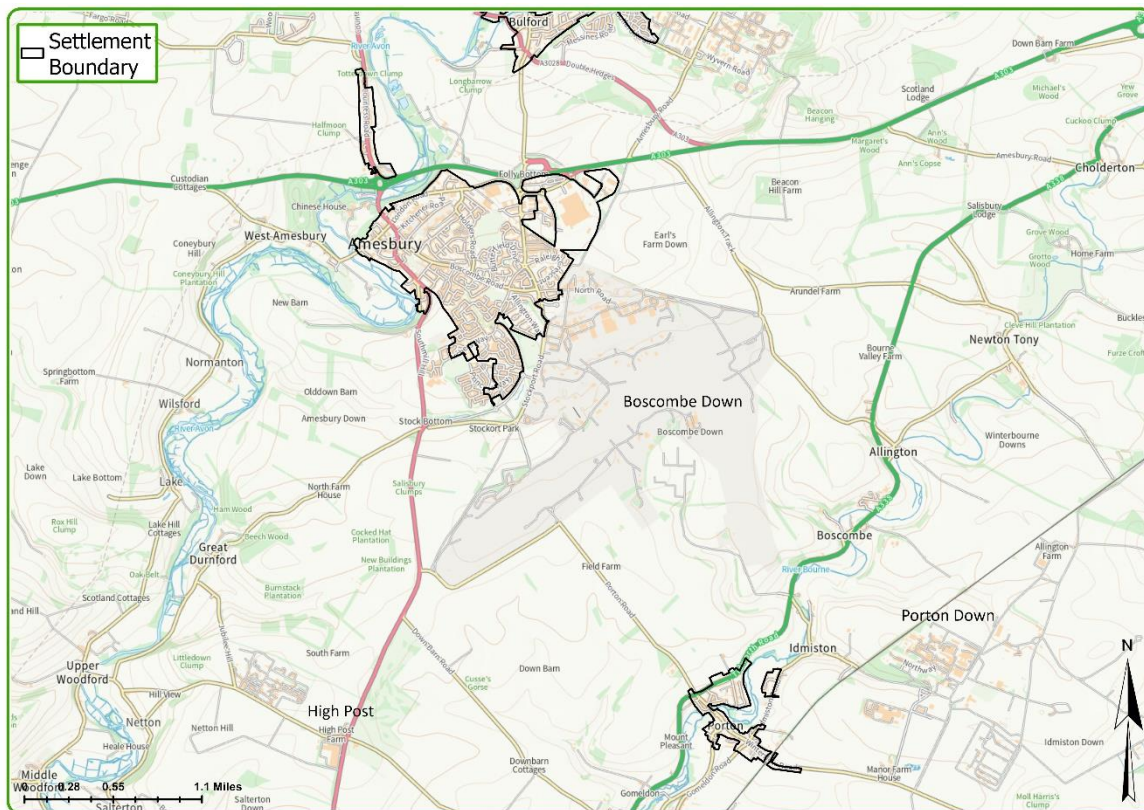


Figure 2. Geographical context for Boscombe Down, Porton Down and High Post.

How has Amesbury developed?

The last 25 years have seen the delivery of major planned residential growth in Amesbury, with significant developments taking place at King’s Gate and the earlier Archer’s Gate to the south of the settlement. Development at Kings Gate is ongoing and will continue to be delivered into the early part of the Local Plan period.

The following diagram shows how much housing has been delivered in Amesbury from 2006 to 2022.

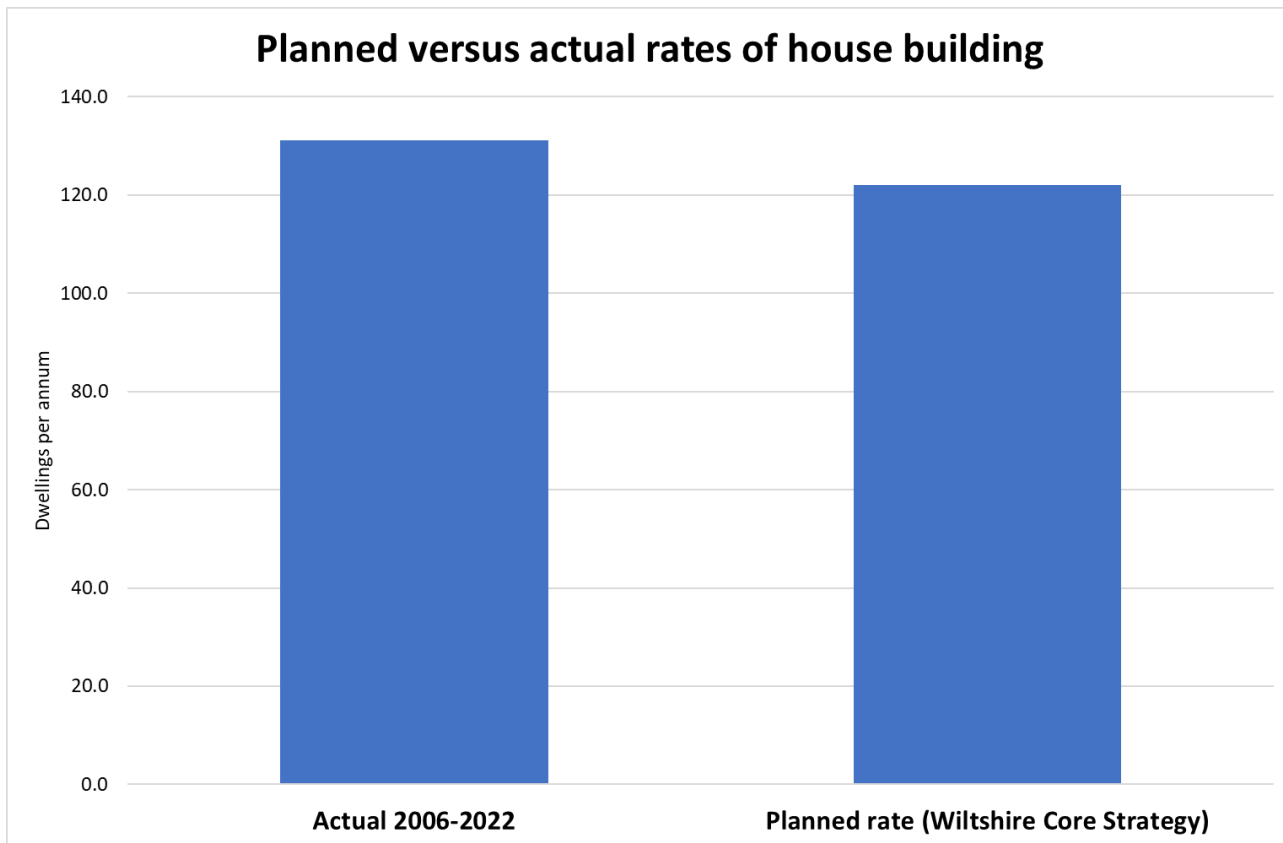


Figure 3. Planned versus actual rates of housing building

In addition, a major employment site at Solstice Park has been developed to the northern edge of the town close to the A303. Solstice Park is a 64ha business park containing predominantly large warehouse, units, distribution units and ancillary offices. Along with the adjoining London Road business park, Solstice Park is designated as a Principal Employment Area which plays an important economic role in South Wiltshire. Solstice Park has good occupancy levels and low vacancy rates, reflecting buoyant demand for well-connected employment sites with infrastructure in place. The final phases of the development are expected to come forward within the Local Plan period.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy also allocated a Principal Employment Area and employment allocation within the northern part of the Boscombe Down site. To date this has not been delivered and continues to be occupied by office and storage buildings associated with Boscombe Down aerodrome. This has been replaced by a broader policy relating to the wider Boscombe Down site.

Principal Employment Areas are also located in the wider Amesbury area at Porton Down and High Post, which continue to play an important economic role.

While development of the out-of-centre Solstice Park has not directly benefited the vitality and viability of Amesbury town centre, it has created job opportunities locally and provided for greater retail choice in Amesbury and the surrounding area. There have been few significant developments within Amesbury town centre in recent years. The town centre is modest in scale with a localised retail function whose catchment is to some degree

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influenced by the nearby higher order centre of Salisbury. Amesbury does however have a good level of self-containment, benefitting from a range of services and facilities including three supermarkets.

The Wiltshire Retail and Town Centre Study (2020) concludes that overall, Amesbury has a healthy town centre which has adapted to recent changes in the retail landscape. The convenience goods sector at Amesbury town centre has not experienced any material decline since the development of out-of-town shopping at Tesco and Home Bargains, and the town centre continues to benefit from the town centre ALDI. While Amesbury town centre has a limited catchment, it has a complementary role to the nearby cite centre of Salisbury.

The map below illustrates the Wiltshire Core Strategy land use policies along with significant development sites at the town.

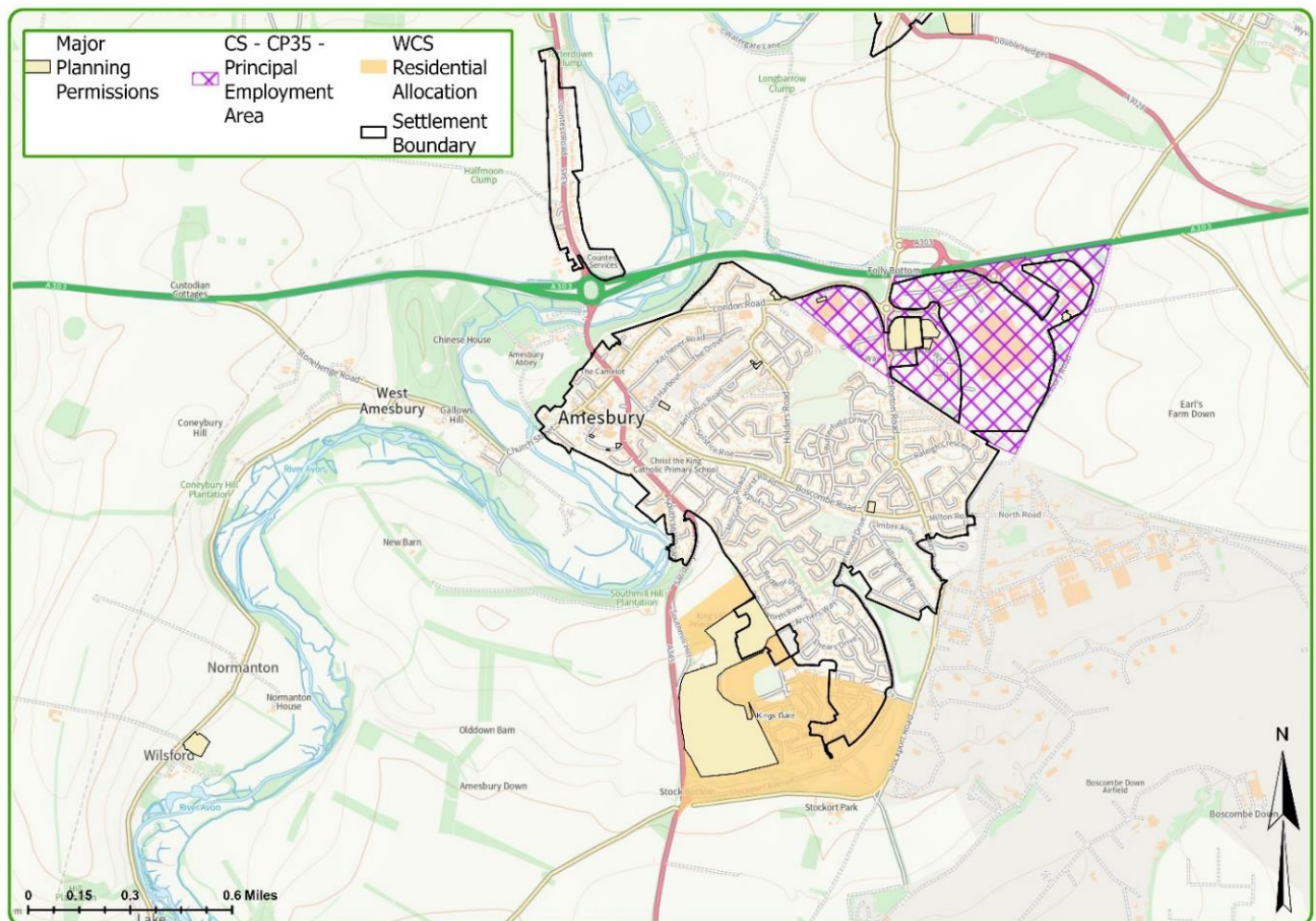


Figure 4. Major planning permissions and existing development plan allocations in Amesbury.

Planning to 2038

Looking ahead, against the backdrop of its environmental context, the strategic direction that flows from how Amesbury has developed over recent years is in summary:

Amesbury has seen rapid residential growth in recent years. The town is situated within an historically sensitive landscape which presents a significant challenge in terms of identifying suitable land for further growth; albeit dwellings planned for in the last plan period will continue to be delivered in the coming years. Solstice Park and Boscombe Down will continue to support the local economy; capitalising on Amesbury's proximity to the A303 and Porton Science Park. Opportunities will be explored for further specialist high quality employment at Boscombe Down to further benefit South Wiltshire's economy.

A set of Place Shaping Priorities (PSPs) address matters first highlighted in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and new issues that now also need to be tackled as set out above. They result from working with Amesbury Town Council and wider consultation with the community and other stakeholders carried out in 2021.

They are as follows:

PLACE SHAPING PRIORITIES

PSP1 Sustainable communities: Promote Amesbury as a more self-sufficient town, with the housing, infrastructure and employment opportunities available to encourage a diverse range of residents to live, work and enjoy leisure time in the town.

PSP2 Sport and recreation: Improve recreational facilities and sports pitches in Amesbury.

PSP3 Town centre: Encourage town centre improvements to the quality of the public realm and encourage development of tourism and tourist accommodation to capitalise on the town's proximity to Stonehenge.

PSP4 Transport: Reduce congestion on the A345 and A303, with a view to improving the attractiveness of Amesbury town centre.

PSP5 Active travel: Improve opportunities for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport options in and around Amesbury.

PSP6 Boscombe Down and Porton Down: Support further development of specialist high quality employment at Boscombe Down / Porton Down.

PSPs sit alongside the spatial strategy for Amesbury. One of their purposes is to describe what growth intends to help deliver and how change should be managed. They form the basis for an overarching planning policy for Amesbury that guides development and the direction of growth.

PSPs therefore provide a succinct strategic context within which to better understand the spatial strategy for the main settlements. They also set a framework to co-ordinate the high level and strategic role of the Local Plan with the function of neighbourhood plans prepared

by town and parish councils that set more detailed visions for the future of each community. The two sets of plans therefore work in harness.

PSPs are also used to influence how and more precisely where development will take place as an important part in the selection of sites for new development; albeit as there are no further allocations made at Amesbury, PSPs are frames to influence development opportunities that may arise through other avenues later in the plan period.

Scales of growth at the town, as set out in the Revised Spatial Strategy, respond to the level of housing and employment growth that has taken place at Amesbury in recent years along with development that is still coming forward as a result of planned commitments; within the context of the significant environmental (heritage) constraints at the town.

The new strategy identifies a requirement of 530 additional homes for the plan period 2020 to 2038. However, there are homes committed under the Wiltshire Core Strategy that are yet to be delivered that are expected to come forward in the early part of the Local Plan period. Over the Local Plan period this represents a decrease in the rate of house building compared to the high levels of growth that were enabled through the Wiltshire Core Strategy and its predecessor plans.



Figure 5. Current Plan growth versus Local Plan Review growth.

The housing growth already planned for Amesbury will continue to support the vitality and viability of the town centre, increasing the available pool of local spending. The development of the large King's Gate and earlier Archer's Gate sites has led to the development of additional infrastructure and services to support the expanded community.

There are very modest needs identified for additional employment land over the Local Plan period. Evidence suggests there will not be strong demand to develop additional retail floorspace. Opportunities for investment in the town centre may need to be driven by other sectors.

3. Local Plan Proposals

Protecting the environment

Amesbury is constrained in environmental terms, in particular due to its location within an ancient landscape, its archaeological potential and its relationship with the nearby Stonehenge World Heritage Site. It is also constrained by the presence of the A303 to the north, which serves as a physical barrier and potential source of noise and air pollution to land within its vicinity; and constrained by a range of Ministry of Defence safeguarding zones around the Boscombe Down aerodrome. The Local Plan recognises these constraints, and the strategy for Amesbury has been shaped to reflect them.

The World Heritage Site is a designated heritage asset of the highest international and national significance. The requirement to protect, conserve, present and transmit the site to future generations because of its exceptional qualities, is an obligation that must be given precedence in decisions concerning planning for land in and around the World Heritage Site. The settlement of Amesbury falls close to Stonehenge, and it therefore follows that potential impacts on the setting of the World Heritage Site must be a key consideration when planning for the town.

Archaeological potential is very high in the Amesbury area with finds of international significance having been discovered in the town's vicinity. The 'Amesbury Archer' burial was discovered in 2002 during an archaeological excavation at the Archer's Gate development site. Many significant artefacts were found with the early Bronze Age skeletal remains alongside copper knives, arrowheads, wrist guards and a gold hair ornament. The significance of the finds was not fully understood until the excavation, highlighting the undiscovered archaeological potential of land around Amesbury.

Significant areas of land around Amesbury and High Post have been promoted by landowners for consideration as part of preparing the plan. Assessment of sites promoted, however, has confirmed that much of the land around Amesbury is subject to the significant constraints highlighted above, that are judged to render most of the sites promoted inappropriate for further consideration.

How many more homes?

From the reduced scale of growth over the plan period (see above) can be deducted homes already built and those already in the pipeline. What is left and necessary to plan for is called

the residual requirement. When the number of homes built and in the pipeline is deducted it leaves a further 120 homes to be accommodated at Amesbury up until 2038.

Some of the homes planned for by the Wiltshire Core Strategy have been constructed since the Local Plan start date of 2020 or have yet to be constructed within the Local Plan period. A proportion of the residual requirement is expected to be delivered as small site developments (windfall), and also as allocations within the neighbourhood plan for Amesbury. This means there is no outstanding requirement to allocate land for housing within the Local Plan. However, available sites have been assessed.

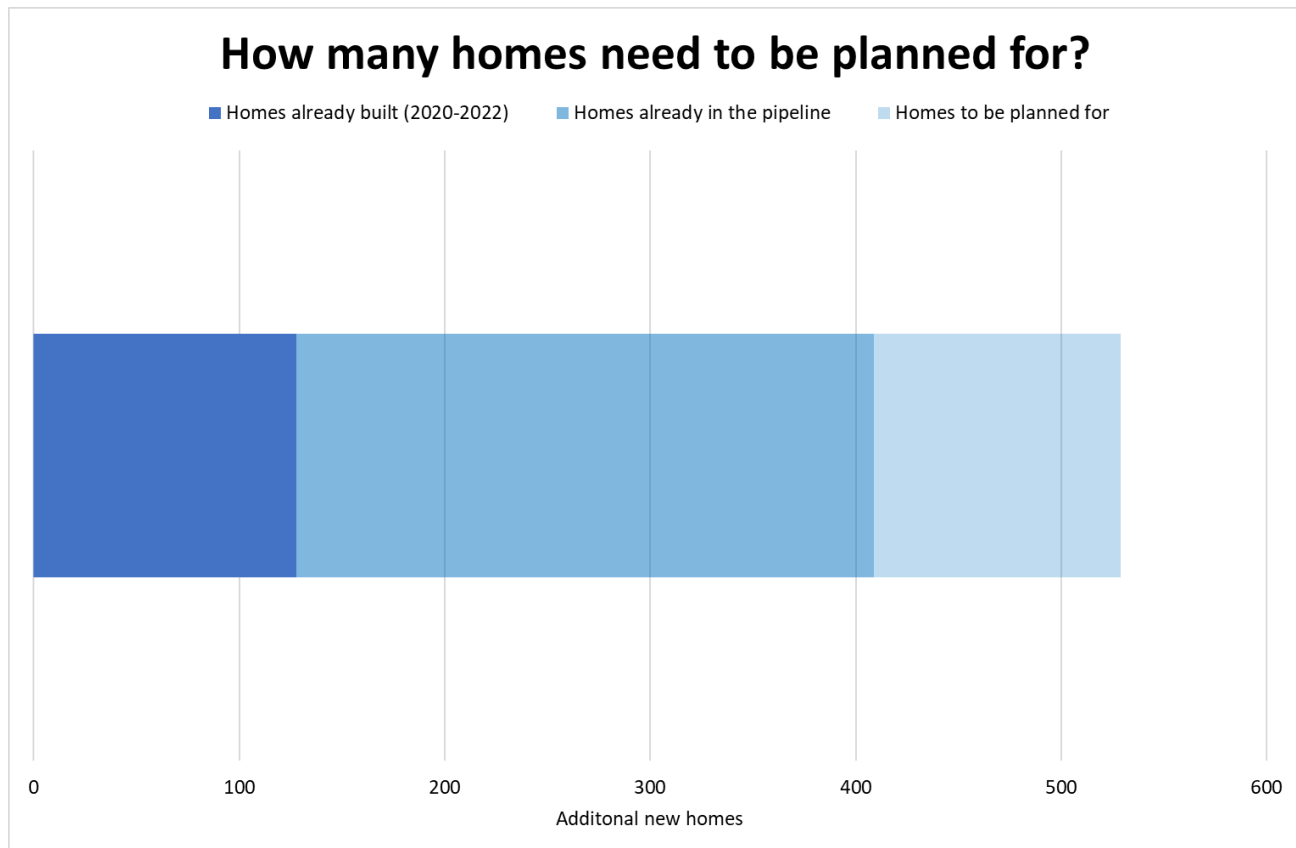


Figure 6. How many homes need to be planned for in Amesbury?

How much employment land?

No sites are allocated for employment land over the Local Plan period.

The importance of Boscombe Down and the potential for future investment in the site is recognised within the Local Plan. In the wider Amesbury area, the Local Plan also continues to set out policy support for the development of research and development premises for the nationally important biosciences sector at Porton Down; and employment uses at High Post continue to be supported.

Selecting sites

While there is no residual strategic requirement to be met at Amesbury over the Local Plan period. Available sites have been assessed. Three sites at Amesbury and one site at High Post

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were considered reasonable alternatives for development and assessed through Sustainability Appraisal as shown on the map below.

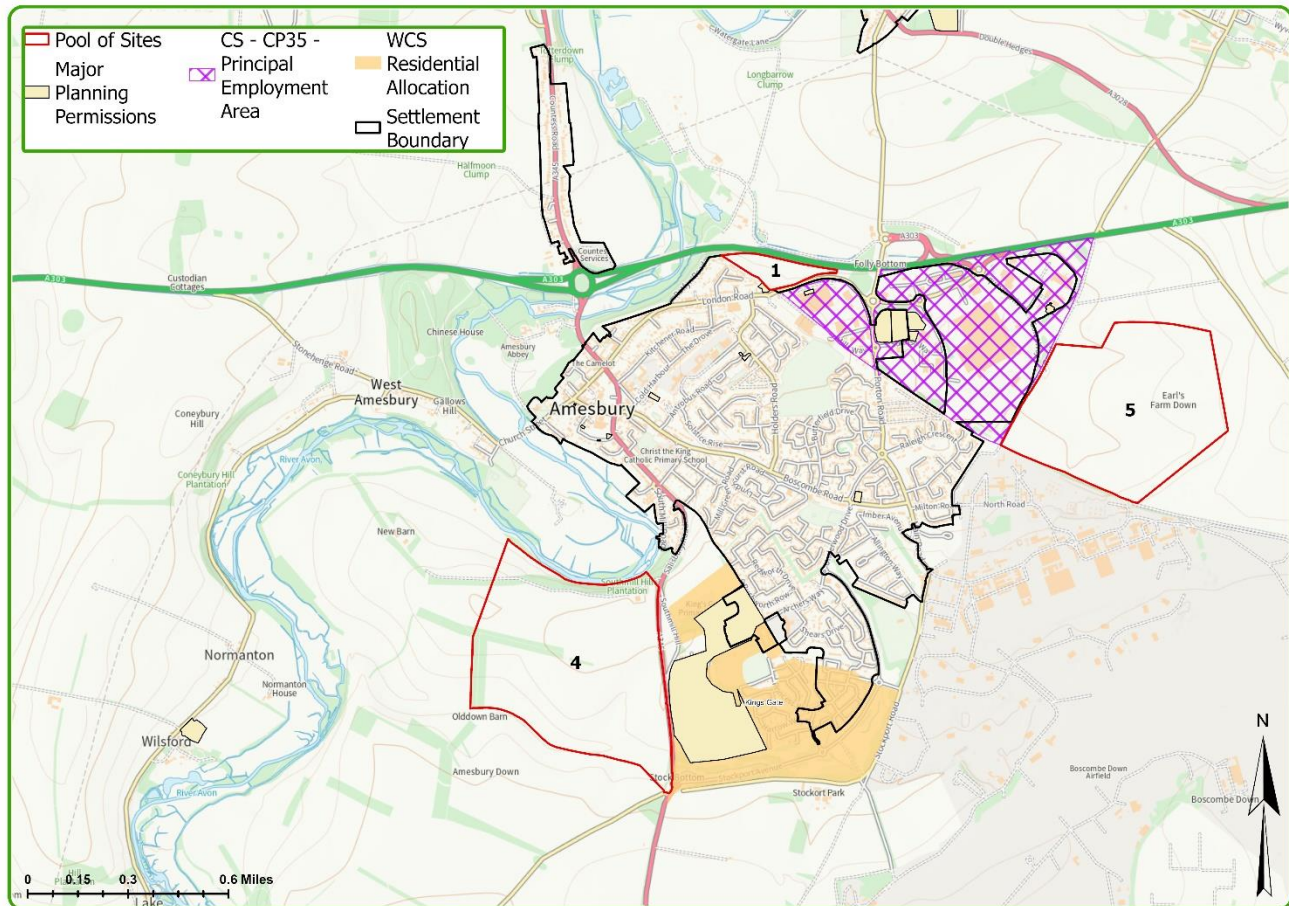


Figure 8. Pool of sites assessed through Sustainability Appraisal in Amesbury.

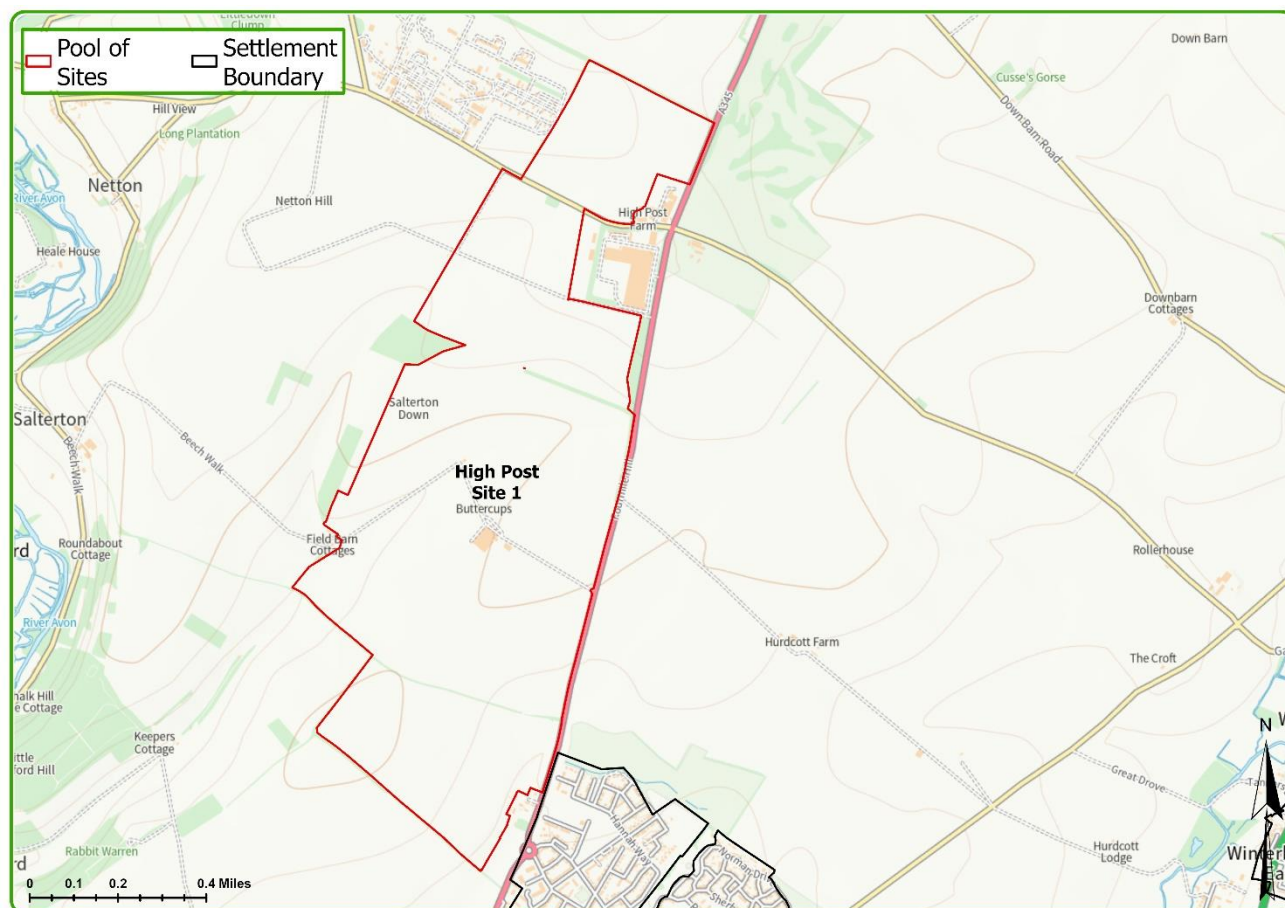


Figure 9. Pool of sites assessed through Sustainability Appraisal at High Post.

These sites resulted from a two-stage sifting process that removed land incapable of being developed without unacceptable impacts. Sustainability Appraisal assesses what likely significant effects development of a site would incur, both positive and negative. Those sites that performed better in sustainability terms were those that were considered likely to have fewer significant adverse environmental effects and greater social and economic benefits.

Sustainability Appraisal ranked sites by their social, environmental and economic effects. Site selection was also informed by how well each site was likely to perform against the settlement's Place Shaping Priorities.

Sustainability Appraisal showed all the sites were likely to result in significant negative environmental effects. They are all greenfield sites in edge of settlement locations, none of which have been deemed appropriate for development.

Site 1 (Land at London Road) is constrained by several factors, including its proximity to the A303 as sources of noise and air pollution coupled with its sloped bowl-like landform which is judged to render the site inappropriate for residential development due to inadequate opportunities to mitigate for this. The site also has some potential for onsite archaeological features.

Site 4 (South West Amesbury / Viney's Farm) is heavily constrained across the entirety of the site by significant archaeological potential and probability for adverse impacts on the historic

setting of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, which renders it inappropriate to consider further for allocation. Parts of the site are close to areas of ecological value, and the site is partially within a safeguarding zone associated with the nearby Boscombe Down site.

Site 5 (East of Solstice Park) is also heavily constrained by significant archaeological potential, which renders it inappropriate to consider further for allocation. The site's location adjoining Solstice Park Business Park, Boscombe Down and the A303 may form a logical extension to the employment use, however heritage constraints are significant. The site is proximate to Boscombe Down which means that preservation of operational capabilities of the aerodrome is a consideration.

High Post Site 1 (Land at High Post) is spatially separate from Amesbury, being located on the A345 between Amesbury and the nearby city of Salisbury. The site is of a significant scale on land that rises from the south towards a high point within the local landscape on the northern part of the site. The open, rolling landscape setting and the Old Sarum scheduled monument have potential to be impacted by significant growth on this site. A reduced, more moderate scale of growth is unlikely to be of a scale which could support a sustainable residential community without heavy reliance on the private car. Land at High Post is a Principal Employment Area which supports a range of locally important economic activities. There may be scope for modest future extension to the employment offer at High Post, should an identified need arise.

The methodology and detailed assessments made in the site selection process are all explained in Appendix 2. The Sustainability Appraisal process and its results are contained in a separate report.²

What development is proposed?

No sites have been identified for development at Amesbury or High Post over the Local Plan period, due to there being no strategic need to do so. Furthermore, the available sites identified at Amesbury and High Post were found to be subject to insurmountable negative impacts making them unsuitable for allocation.

A neighbourhood plan is being prepared for Amesbury. Neighbourhood planning lends itself to identifying small to medium sized sites for housing and other forms of development. Non-strategic sites in the neighbourhood plan have the potential to supplement the proposals of the Local Plan Review and deliver a small quantum of housing alongside employment land.

The Local Plan Review, however, proposes the central, strategic, development proposals. They are explained below.

Boscombe Down

Boscombe Down is a strategically important employment site for south Wiltshire and has the potential for further inward investment/regeneration to expand its role. The nature of

² Wiltshire Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Report July 2023

potential future uses is currently unclear, but the strategic policy supports opportunities for regeneration as and when they should arise over the coming years, beyond 2026 when the current lease with Qinetiq comes to an end. This enables opportunities for reciprocal business relationships with defence uses while preserving the military operational uses at its core. Land within the site has been previously identified redevelopment and this remains a possibility (up to 12ha). This land parcel should be considered for future as part of a comprehensive master planning approach to the site.

The following policy will apply:

Boscombe Down Airfield has the potential for further inward investment to expand its role that will involve redevelopment, re-use of buildings, and land. Development within and around the airfield should:

1. Preserve the use of Boscombe airfield and its runways for operational military uses; and
2. Support a complementary range of defence and aerospace business uses.

Porton Down

Use	Scale/Area
Specialist research and development	10 ha

Porton Down is an internationally important centre for scientific research and development. It is strategically important site for a growing scientific research capacity in the UK and is located close to Salisbury and Amesbury. The main occupiers at Porton Down are DSTL, UKHSA and Porton Science Park (operated by Wiltshire Council).

The site is highly valued for its contribution to nationally important research and development and its role within the UK and South Wiltshire's economy. The expansion of Porton Down through the further development of the Porton Down Science Park is ongoing, led by the Porton Down Masterplan SPD (2007) which sets a progressive and facilitating framework of development principles designed to promote the delivery of a biosciences-led business incubation facility. Roughly half of the 10ha site has been completed and the remainder of the site expected to be delivered within the Local Plan period.

The Porton Down Masterplan is a whole site framework which aims to ensure all future occupiers can meet their business needs with minimum regulatory intervention. However, it is now some years old, and would benefit from review to ensure that the remainder of the site and the evolving plans and needs of the occupiers can be met in a manner which is fit for the future, particularly to meet the needs of bioscience research in a post-pandemic world. Along with this review consideration should be given to frontloading and simplifying the processing routes to deliver, while at the same time safeguarding the high environmental setting within which the site is set.

Porton Down is situated close to an internationally designated Special Protection Area (SPA), principally designated for its large population of the rare stone curlew. The site is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for its chalk grassland habitat and population of butterflies; and designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The council have, and will continue to, work closely with the Porton Down scientific community, Natural England and appropriate conservation bodies to avoid potentially adverse effects of known future business development upon Natura 2000 designations.

The following policy will apply:

The council will continue to strongly support and promote the principle of the continued development of the Porton Science Park for research and development purposes, to be delivered in accordance with the Porton Down Masterplan, or a subsequent iteration of the masterplan. The council will continue to work with the principal site stakeholders to enable the continued evolution of the site to secure the long-term future of Porton Down as an internationally important site for Health and Life Sciences and Defence and Security Technologies

Principal Employment Area: Solstice Park

Solstice Park is situated to the northeast of Amesbury, benefitting from excellent connectivity to the A303. The site is a large modern employment site catering for a range of occupiers including Home Bargains, TJ Morris and Travis Perkins. The site enjoys good levels of occupancy, but there is no scope for intensification within the site. The site continues to be designated as a Principal Employment Area within the Local Plan.

Principal Employment Area: London Road

London Road PEA, also known as Minton Distribution Park/Amesbury Distribution Park, is situated to the northeast of Amesbury adjoining Solstice Park and also benefitting from excellent connectivity to the A303. The site has a mix of modern and older units including a variety of users including trade counters, garages, serviced offices, recycling centre and storage units. The site enjoys good levels of occupancy, but there is no scope for intensification within the site. The site continues to be designated as a Principal Employment Area within the Local Plan.

Principal Employment Area: High Post

High Post PEA is situated on the A345 roughly equidistant between Amesbury and Salisbury. The site comprises industrial and warehouse buildings, along with a petrol filling station and hotel. The site is reasonably well occupied. The surrounding land is open and agricultural. There may be potential for future modest extension to the site should needs arise, through an extension to the PEA. The site continues to be designated as a Principal Employment Area within the Local Plan.

Supporting the Town Centre

The Local Plan contains a framework that describes how all the different uses found in the central area function together. It provides context and certainty to business and services. It indicates how the area will operate over the plan period.

The Local Plan Review defines a hierarchy of town centres and the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas. The town centre hierarchy is largely consistent with the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy 68 Managing Town Centres. The role of each centre correlates to the role of the wider settlement within the settlement hierarchy. The town centre hierarchy defines Town Centres Boundaries and Primary Shopping Areas within Principal Settlement, Market Towns and Local Service Centres. Within this hierarchy, Principal Settlements provide strategic centres; Market Towns are large shopping and service focused centres with smaller catchments; and Local Service Centres provide a range of shops and services for the local population, thus serving a village centre function.

The Town Centre Boundaries and Primary Shopping Area Boundaries were identified in the 2015 Retail Review. The 2020 Wiltshire Retail and Town Study reviewed these boundaries and found them to be up to date.

Amesbury is defined as a Market Town in the town centre hierarchy. The town centre boundary and primary shopping area can be found on the policy map.

The Local Plan aim is to strengthen the town centre,

Amesbury has a relatively small town centre which is arranged around High Street, Salisbury Street, the western part of Earls Court Road, Smithfield Street, The Centre, and part of Salisbury Road. The character of town centre uses is predominantly smaller retail, commercial and hospitality units, mainly falling within Amesbury's historic core and Conservation Area. Larger units, including a supermarket, are located in the southern part of the town centre, outside of the Conservation Area. Many of the town's larger commercial units are located at Solstice Park, to the east of Amesbury. The town centre faces a degree of competition from the larger city centre of Salisbury, located some 8 miles south. The result of this is that Amesbury has a strong service led role in serving the local community.

The Retail and Town Centres Study 2020 indicates some capacity for new convenience retail and limited capacity for additional comparison goods retail floor space. The convenience floorspace capacity suggests that an additional medium sized food store could be supported at the town, however the Study overall finds that there is sufficient floorspace to meet these retail needs in Amesbury. This reflects good retention of convenience retail stores and as such, maintaining the current offer should be a focus for the plan period. There could be potential to grow the food and beverage market over the plan period.

Opportunities for Amesbury town centre to grow are limited due to the physical limitations of land availability, and the historic character of much of the area. However, opportunities to improve the town centre offer exist through sensitive and well-planned redevelopment of

existing units. Over the plan period, it is anticipated that the land use make-up of the town centre may evolve, reflecting changes to the national legislative and policy frameworks. The public health implications of new hot-food takeaways will be a key consideration for proposals of this nature and new clusters of these land uses should be avoided within Amesbury Town Centre.

Through careful planning, the quality of the public realm is to be improved to improve legibility and to support and encourage tourism development to capitalise on the town's proximity to Stonehenge.

4. How will growth be delivered?

Landowners, business and housebuilders are the main drivers of development over the plan period. Service providers may also come forward with proposals to invest in new facilities that support growth in new homes and local business. The Council as local planning authority determines their planning applications in accordance with the Local Plan. It also determines them in accordance with policies of a Neighbourhood Plan that serves to guide the shape and form of non-strategic aspects of development, such as developing locally distinctive policies on design.

Role of neighbourhood planning

The Local Plan sets the overarching context for neighbourhood planning in Wiltshire. Strategic policies of the Local Plan are high level and limited to those necessary to address strategic priorities in Wiltshire. At a local level, communities can play an important role in shaping their areas by producing neighbourhood plans which direct where new development should take place, and how it should look. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies set by the Local Plan but can add further locally specific requirements that reflect the wishes of the local community.

The Local Plan sets out a series of Place Shaping Priorities for Amesbury that have been devised in consultation with Amesbury Town Council. The Place Shaping Priorities set a range of outcomes for the town over the lifetime of the Local Plan to 2038. The Place Shaping Priorities also provide a context that can influence the direction of neighbourhood plans.

In order to assist in the production of neighbourhood plans, Wiltshire Council is also required to provide a scale of housing to plan for, for each one. Sites allocated through neighbourhood plans contribute towards meeting the overall of scale of growth set by the Local Plan, as well as meeting local needs identified through the evidence gathering process for the neighbourhood plan. An element of the Local Plan strategy is therefore to be delivered by neighbourhood plans.

To set an appropriate scale of growth to be planned for through neighbourhood plans at the main settlements (Principal Settlements and Market Towns), a range of factors have been considered:

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- Neighbourhood planning lends itself to identifying small to medium sized sites for housing development; and national planning policy sets a target of 10% of overall requirements to be met on sites no larger than a hectare.
- The stage a neighbourhood plan has reached in its preparation, the community's appetite to plan for new homes and its focus all affect the degree to which neighbourhood planning can contribute. The neighbourhood plan can help to meet housing needs in a form that matches local needs.
- The nature and extent of the area designation and what scope there is to identify sites for housing development may be limited, for example, if boundaries are drawn tight to the built-up area and most opportunities will be windfall and difficult to identify.

The Amesbury Neighbourhood Area was formally designated in August 2021, and Amesbury Town Council are in early evidence gathering stages of preparing a neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood area designation is for the parish area of Amesbury including Amesbury town and its environs. The neighbourhood area designation provides scope within and on the edge of the urban area to allocate suitable sites.

While there is no strategic scale of housing growth to be delivered at Amesbury over the Local Plan period, there are likely to be opportunities for the neighbourhood planning process to identify small to medium scale sites to deliver a modest level of growth over the Local Plan period. This could include brownfield sites or land within the built edges of the settlement where potential impacts on the historic environment are likely to be reduced.

There are no other Local Service Centres or Large Villages within the Amesbury neighbourhood area (parish boundary) that have their own separate indicative rural housing requirements³. Ten per cent of the scale of growth identified at Amesbury suggests a neighbourhood area requirement for Amesbury of approximately 50 dwellings.

The neighbourhood area requirement should be considered in combination with other evidence of local needs as determined by the neighbourhood planning group. The neighbourhood area requirement is for the Local Plan period up to 2038, and therefore may be delivered over one or more iterations of a neighbourhood plan within this period.

Amesbury neighbourhood area requirement (2020 to 2038)	50
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³ Neighbourhood area requirements for the rural parishes are calculated separately, as set out within the Rural Housing Requirements Methodology paper.

Local infrastructure

Any additional growth at Amesbury brought forward through the neighbourhood planning process would need to be supported by the correct infrastructure, services and facilities. When planning for growth, it is important to consider the characteristics of the town in terms of key services and infrastructure (e.g. green infrastructure, transport and utilities), as well as the local economy. The following summarises the measures required to be put in place to address employment growth proposals for Amesbury as well as known infrastructure issues and their timing, what additional provision is necessary to support growth and what other opportunities there may be.

Sustainable transport and active travel

Amesbury is well served by the A303 which provides strategic links south-east and south-west England. The A345 is also an important secondary A road that links Salisbury to Marlborough, via Amesbury. The A345 is well served by regular bus services along this route.

There are issues related to congestion in the town centre and known pressures on key junctions linked to the wider transport network, for which improvement will be sought wherever possible. There are also Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Salisbury, which Amesbury traffic feeds into. Opportunities to address local air quality concerns will also be sought.

Highway connectivity, reducing the need to travel and making it easier for people to use sustainable modes of transport are essential in supporting the scale of growth at the town, as reflected in the Place Shaping Priorities. These seek improvements to the local transport network that reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality in the town centre and promote sustainable transport and active travel, such as infrastructure to support pedestrian and cycling routes from the new employment sites. Relevant future development proposals will be expected to contribute towards improving highways and air quality conditions.

Key improvements that contribute to the overall ambition for Amesbury:

- Urban walking and cycling routes – a safe connected network to and from the proposed employment allocations.
- Traffic management and re- routing to ensure vehicle movements are focused on the most appropriate routes.
- Investment in electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Active travel promotional campaigns.

Utilities

Electricity infrastructure is constrained across much of Wiltshire. The Grid Supply Points in Wiltshire, located in Minety, Melksham and Mannington are all constrained. The Bulk Supply Point (BSP) north of Amesbury reinforcements are expected to be completed in late 2026.

With the uptake of low carbon technology, the move towards net zero, there are estimates that energy demand could almost treble by 2050. This increased pressure on the system is something Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN), as Distribution Systems Operator, is working on to manage new capacity. Solutions may include flexible connections, renewable energy, and further investment to reinforce the current infrastructure.

Information from SSEN indicates the Boscombe substation to the southwest of the town are also constrained. This means new generators may require investment in the infrastructure to be able to connect to the grid.

Developing sites at Amesbury may require upgrades to water infrastructure connecting the local water recycling centre.

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Appendix 1 Policy Context

Strategic policy	Title	Retain, Replace or Delete
WCS CP4 Amesbury Community Area	<p>Spatial Strategy: Amesbury Community Area</p> <p>Spatial Strategy Warminster Community Area</p> <p>Strategic allocations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kings Gate, Amesbury • Kings Gate, Amesbury • Boscombe Down <p>Principal Employment Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solstice Park; • Boscombe Down; • London Road; • Porton Down; • High Post. 	<p>Replaced with Policy 36 Amesbury</p> <p>Delete: Boscombe Down PEA</p>
WCS CP5 Porton Down		Replaced with Policy 38 Porton Down
E8B Land at Boscombe and Porton Down		Replaced with new Boscombe Down Policy 37 Porton Down: Replaced with Policy 38
S1 Primary Shopping Frontages in Salisbury and Amesbury		Replaced by Policy 68 Managing Town Centres
S2 Secondary Shopping Areas in Salisbury and Amesbury		Replaced by Policy 68 Managing Town Centres

R8 New Sports and Recreation Provision (Stockport Road, Amesbury)		Replaced by Policy 68 Managing Town Centres
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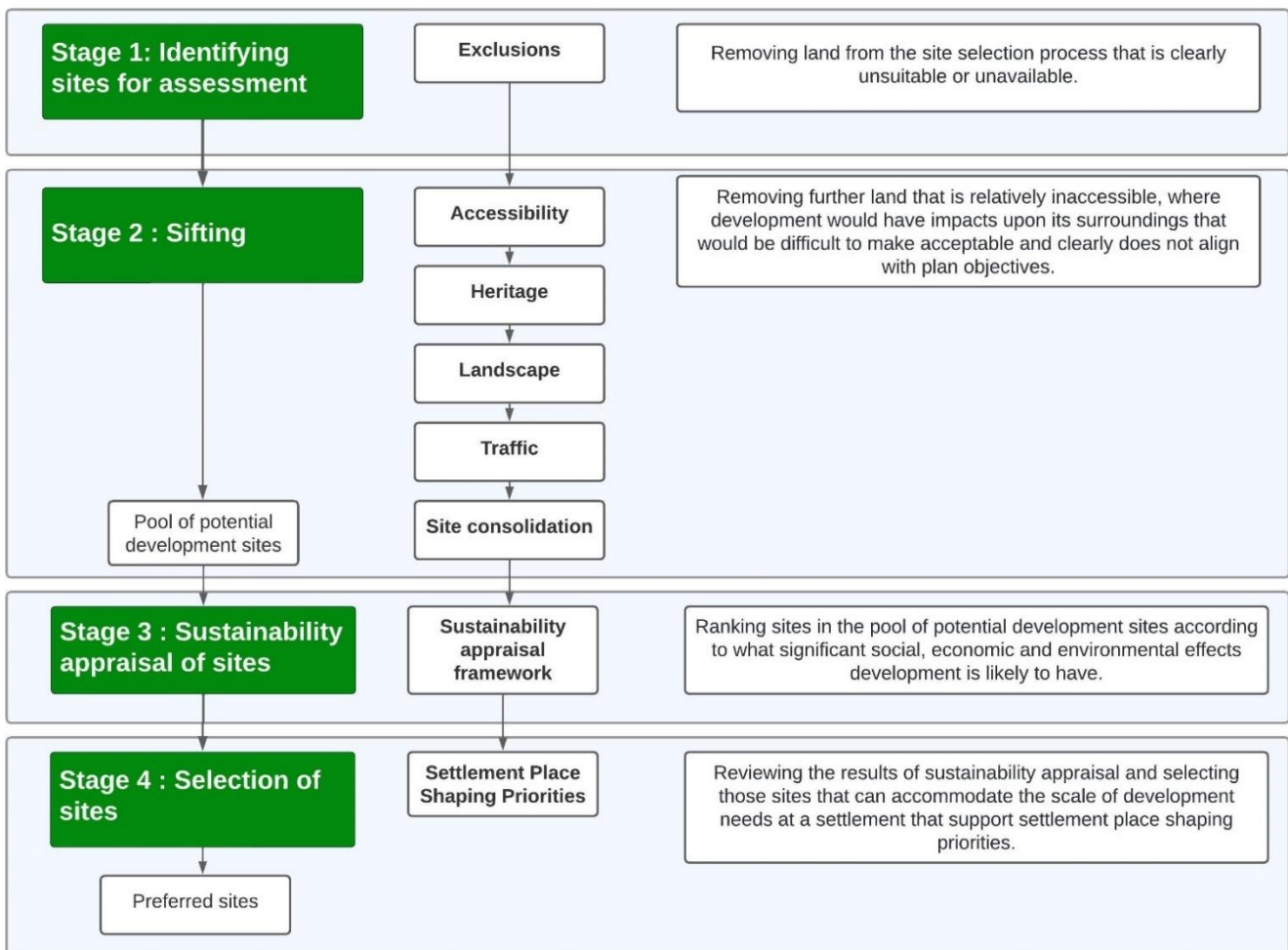
Appendix 2 Site Selection

Site Selection: Amesbury and High Post

The purpose of this appendix is to explain the site selection process at Amesbury and High Post, which takes place over a number of stages, as illustrated in the flow diagram below. The full methodology can be found in the supporting Site Selection Methodology report.

This appendix briefly describes the methodology, and explains the outputs that emerge from Stages 1-4, with the concluding stages set out within the main body of this paper.

Summary of the site selection process



Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment

The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment⁴ (SHELAA) provides the initial pool of land from which sites may be selected. The SHELAA is a register of land promoted for development by landowners and prospective developers. Parcels of land are submitted to Wiltshire Council for consideration as potential allocations in the Local Plan, as well as Parish and Town Council neighbourhood plans⁵. Plan preparation and not the SHELAA determines what land is suitable for development through a process of selecting the most appropriate sites.

Only sites that were not spatially separated from the built-up edge were considered. The maps below show the SHELAA sites that were considered through the site selection process at Amesbury and High Post.

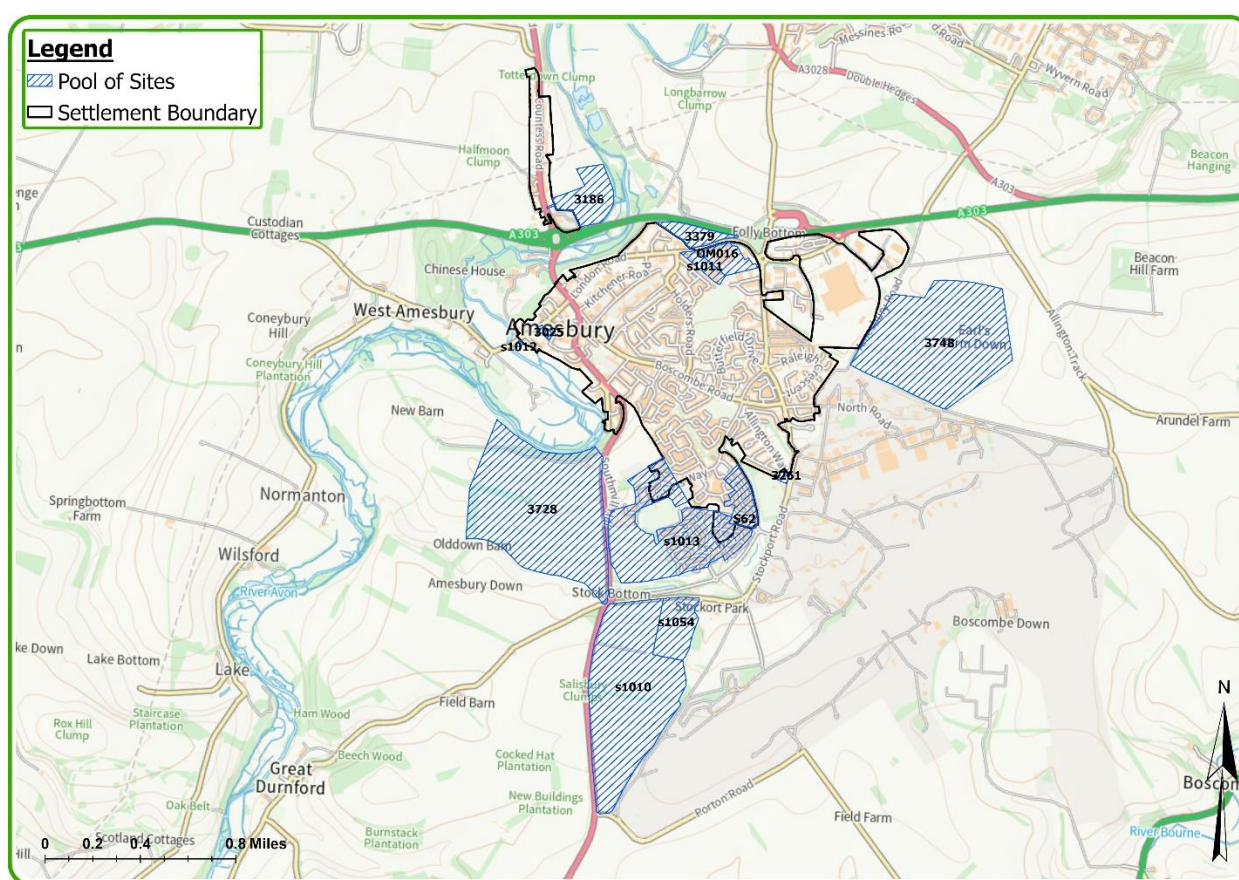


Figure 10. Pool of sites in Amesbury.

⁴ Information about the [Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment](#) can be found on the Council website.

⁵ Other land, not included in the SHELAA, may possibly be capable of development but because neither a developer nor landowner has promoted the site for development, the site cannot readily be said to be available within the plan period.

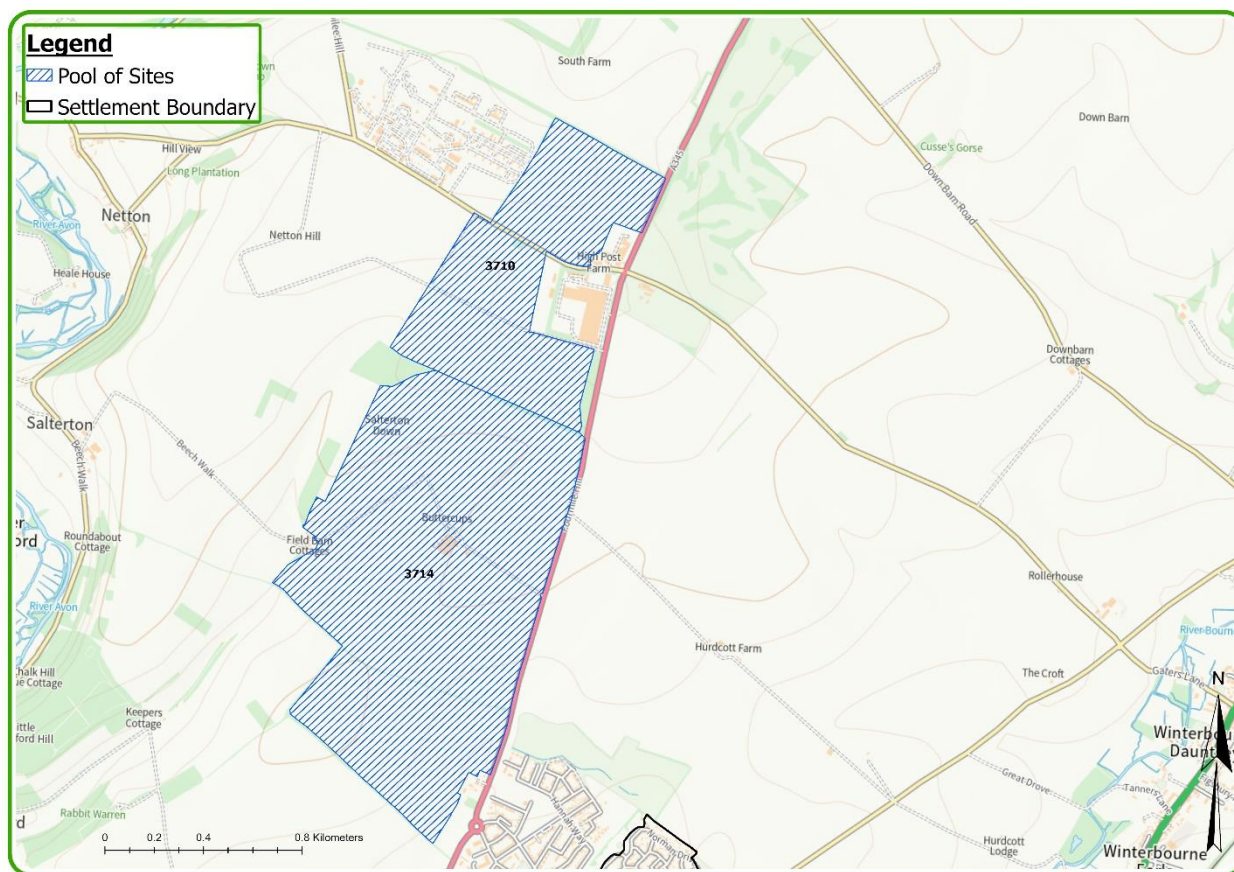


Figure 11. Pool of site at High Post

The following paragraphs summarise the stages of assessment undertaken through the site selection process.

Stage 1 – Identifying Sites for Assessment

The initial stage excluded SHELAA sites from further consideration that constitute unsuitable land for development if they are unavailable, separated from the built-edge or clearly unsuitable for development for a range of other reasons, as described within the Site Selection Methodology. While sites at High Post do not adjoin the built edge of a main settlement, the sites were considered to have strategic potential that warranted further testing through the site selection process.

Ten sites at Amesbury were excluded at Stage 1.

Site name	Reason for removal at Stage 1
3186	Unavailable. Site earmarked by Highways England as part of strategic transport improvements scheme at the A303 ⁶ .
S1054	Unsuitable. Sites almost in their entirety within explosives safeguarding exclusion zone around MoD site.
S1010	

⁶ [A303 Stonehenge - National Highways](#)

3025	Unsuitable. Below site size threshold.
3261	Unsuitable. Below site size threshold.
S1011	Unavailable. Site built out.
S1012	Unsuitable. Below site size threshold.
S1013	Unavailable. Site built out.
S62	Unavailable. Site built out.
OM016	Unsuitable. Part of a Principal Employment Area.

Stage 2 – Site Sifting

Using the land that passed through Stage 1, a second assessment stage used a limited set of strategic criteria (proportionate evidence⁷) to further refine the list of sites to a set of *reasonable alternatives* for further assessment using Sustainability Appraisal. The criteria considered at Stage 2 were related to **Accessibility and Wider Impacts**, and **Strategic Context**, and can be summarised as follows:

- **Accessibility and Wider Impacts**

The merits of each site were assessed to understand strengths and weaknesses in terms of how accessible a site location may be and what wider impacts could result from their development. Sites deemed to be inaccessible, for example if no reasonable means of access to the site could be secured without third party land, were excluded from further consideration. This is further detailed in the Site Selection Methodology.

In addition to accessibility, the following strategic considerations were tested through Stage 2:

1. **Landscape:** A site that was highly likely to lead to landscape or visual harm, that was unlikely to be possible to be mitigated, was rejected.
2. **Heritage:** A site that contained or was within the setting of a heritage asset, that was likely to lead to significant and unmitigable harm was rejected.
3. **Flood Risk:** A site that was wholly within an area at risk from flooding (e.g. in Flood Zones 2 or 3 or other high-risk source of flooding) was rejected.
4. **Traffic:** A site that was likely to lead to an unacceptable degree of harm in terms of traffic and congestion impacts was rejected.

The outcomes from this element of Stage 2 were categorised as high risk of harm (red), medium risk of harm (amber) and low risk of harm (green).

- **Strategic Context**

⁷ To meet national requirements, plans must be sound, justified by having an appropriate strategy, considering reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence.

This part of the Stage 2 assessment considered the pool of sites in relation to the strategic context of the settlement, having regard to:

- Long-term patterns of development
- Significant environmental factors
- Scale of growth and place shaping priorities
- Future growth possibilities for the urban area

This part of the assessment made a judgement on what pool of possible sites constitute a set of reasonable alternatives for further consideration. This does not pre-judge more detailed testing through Sustainability Appraisal but enables sites that are clearly at odds with the strategic context for the settlement to be ruled out.

Context criteria	Detail
Long-term pattern of development	<p>The historic core of the town developed around the water meadows associated with the River Avon which runs to the north and west of the settlement. Over time the town has grown southwards and round Boscombe Down airfield. In recent years substantial residential development has taken place to the south, at Archers Gate and Kings Gate.</p> <p>The town, and surrounding area, benefits from several Principal Employment Areas, including Boscombe Down; London Road; Porton Down; High Post and Solstice Park.</p>
Significant environmental factors	<p>The River Avon is a significant constraint restricting growth to the north and west of the town. Consequently, there are areas of flood risk along the course of the river.</p> <p>The area has rich historic value. Stonehenge World Heritage Site extends to the north and west of the settlement, and the area has high levels of significant archaeology associated with its position within the Stonehenge landscape.</p> <p>Amesbury Abbey Historic Park and Gardens fringes the northwest of the town. The A303 Trunk Road runs to the north of the town dissecting the main bulk of the settlement from a section of linear development along the A345 to the northwest of the town close to where the A303 and A345 intersect. The A345 continues southward to the west of Amesbury, towards Salisbury.</p> <p>The A303 and A345 to some degree act as a barrier to connectivity of land from the central part of the town.</p>
Scale of growth and strategic priorities	<p>The scale of growth planned for Amesbury is modest, with an expectation that the majority of growth within the Local Plan period will be from land already allocated by the Kings Gate development which is under construction.</p> <p>Strategic priorities include promoting Amesbury as a self-sufficient town encouraging local employment opportunities and encourage tourism linkages between the town and nearby Stonehenge. Developing the town centre to improve the public realm to encourage tourism and spending as well as improvements to infrastructure and transport particularly in relation to the</p>

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	A303 and A345 both of which currently experience congestion and to improve linkages to and from the town. Some of these are priorities which could also be considered through the emerging neighbourhood plan
Future growth possibilities for the urban area	Amesbury is constrained in environmental terms, in particular due to its location within an ancient landscape, its archaeological potential and its relationship with the nearby Stonehenge World Heritage Site. It is also constrained by the presence of the A303 to the north, which serves as a physical barrier and potential source of noise and air pollution to land within its vicinity; and constrained by a range of Ministry of Defence safeguarding zones around the Boscombe Down aerodrome. The Local Plan recognises these constraints, and the strategy for Amesbury has been shaped to reflect them; with a relatively low number of homes to be planned for.

Table X: Stage 2 assessment conclusions

SHELAA Reference	Site Address	Accessibility	Flood Risk	Heritage	Landscape	Traffic	Stage 2A and Stage 2B – Strategic context and overall judgement	Taken Forward
3379	Land north of London Road	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	The site is adjacent to settlement boundary and has good prospects in terms of accessibility. Flood risk unlikely to be an issue for this site. Potential for heritage impact, such as on barrow within site boundary. May have potential to impact on Outstanding Universal Value of WHS. Potential to increase traffic. The site is of a strategic scale and is taken forward for further assessment.	Y
3728	South West Amesbury / Viney's Farm	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	The site is separate from the built edge and not adjacent to the settlement boundary. It is however, adjacent to land and under construction at Kings Gate, east of the A345. Accessibility is severed by the A345 but could be improved. Flood risk unlikely to be an issue for this site, saved for small areas of higher groundwater vulnerability. The site is potentially visible in the landscape, including the Stonehenge WHS, which would require further consideration. Any potential for indirect impact on the OUV of WHS would require assessment. Potential to increase traffic. The site is of a strategic scale and is taken forward for further assessment.	Y
3748	Land at Earl's Farm Down	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	The site adjoins the settlement edge but is severed from assimilation into the town by Solstice Park and Boscombe Down.	Y

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Reference	Site Address	Accessibility	Flood Risk	Heritage	Landscape	Traffic	Stage 2A and Stage 2B – Strategic context and overall judgement	Taken Forward
SHELAA								
3710	Land adjacent to High Post Business Park						<p>The site adjoins High Post employment area but is separate from a settlement. It is however considered that accessibility could be improved if a scale of development with supporting infrastructure were to be delivered as part of a strategically significant development.</p> <p>Flood risk unlikely to be an issue for this site.</p> <p>The site is visible in the landscape, with potential impacts in the Stonehenge WHS landscape and Old Sarum scheduled monument, which would require further consideration.</p> <p>Potential to increase traffic.</p> <p>The site is of a strategic scale and is taken forward for further assessment.</p>	Y
3714	Land west of A345 at High Post						<p>The site is close to High Post employment area but is separate from a settlement. It is however considered that accessibility could be improved if a scale of development with supporting infrastructure were to be delivered as part of a strategically significant development.</p> <p>Flood risk unlikely to be an issue for this site.</p> <p>The site is visible in the landscape, with potential impacts in the Stonehenge WHS landscape and Old Sarum scheduled monument, which would require further consideration.</p> <p>Potential to increase traffic.</p> <p>The site is of a strategic scale and is taken forward for further assessment.</p>	Y

Of those sites that are taken forward, it was appropriate in some cases for to combine sites for the purpose of assessment, where this created more sensible or logical land parcels for further consideration.

Sites combined	Reason
3710 and 3714	The sites abut and have no strong physical barriers between them.

In preparation for Stage 3, the remaining sites were relabelled for ease of understanding, as follows:

Site Number	Site Name	SHELAA reference
1	Land north London Road	3379
4	South West Amesbury / Viney's Farm	3728
5	Land at Earl's Down Farm	3748
High Post 1	Land at High Post	3710 and 3714

Stage 3 - Sustainability Appraisal

At Stage 3, each of the remaining sites in the pool of sites (reasonable alternatives) was examined through Sustainability Appraisal, by assessing the likely significant effects of potential development under a set of twelve objectives covering social, economic and environmental considerations. A full explanation of the Sustainability Appraisal⁸ methodology is provided in a separate report, which also includes the detailed assessments made for each site.

Sustainability Appraisal enabled sites to be scored by their respective sustainability benefits and disadvantages. It also identified where it may be possible to mitigate adverse effects, as well as measures which could increase the benefits of development. Stage 3 enabled sites to be ranked in order of most sustainable to least sustainable, based on the Sustainability Appraisal criteria used.

The table below shows the Sustainability Appraisal conclusions for the reasonable alternative sites that were assessed. The overall Sustainability Appraisal score is shown in column 3 of the table.

The Sustainability Appraisal weights all 'objectives' (shown in the top row, below) equally. There are more environmental objectives than others – scores against this type of objective typically tend to be negative. The overall score resulting from the potential development of greenfield sites generally yield a negative value.

Reasonable alternatives are rejected at Stage 3 where the Sustainability Appraisal concludes that development would result in one or more 'major adverse effect' (highlighted in red with a triple negative).

⁸ Wiltshire Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Report (July 2023)

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At Amesbury, the Sustainability Appraisal identified that there were likely major adverse effects arising from the development of all three sites within the pool of sites. Therefore, no sites were taken forward for further consideration at Amesbury.

At High Post, the Sustainability Appraisal identified overall likely negative impacts from the sites assessed, although no major adverse impacts were identified. Potential landscape and historic landscape/heritage impacts were however noted areas of concern that would require significant mitigation, such as through a significant reduction in the developable area for the site.

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- Major adverse effect (---) = -3 points (Mitigation unachievable – recommended that site is not considered further)
- Moderate adverse effect (--) = -2 points (Mitigation achievable but problematic)
- Minor adverse effect (-) = -1 point (Mitigation easily achievable)
- Neutral effect (0) = 0 points
- Minor positive effect (+) = +1 point
- Moderate positive effect (++) = +2 points
- Major positive effect (+++) = +3 points

Amesbury: Table showing summary of assessment scores listed in order of site sustainability performance (More → Less)

SITE	Overall site score (sustainability rank)	SA obj 1 (Biodiversity) overall score	SA obj 2 (Land + soil) overall score	SA obj 3 (Water) overall score	SA obj 4 (Air/poll'n) overall score	SA obj 5 (Climate) overall score	SA obj 6 (Energy) overall score	SA obj 7 (Heritage) overall score	SA obj 8 (Landscape) overall score	SA obj 9 (Housing) overall score	SA obj 10 (Inc comms) overall score	SA obj 11 (Transport) overall score	SA obj 12 (Economic) overall score
Site 1	-9 (2 nd)	-	-	--	---	-	0	--	-	+	+	-	+
Site 5	-10 (3 rd)	--	--	--	--	-	0	---	--	+++	+	--	++
Site 4	-10 (3 rd)	--	--	--	--	-	0	---	--	+++	+	--	++

High Post: Table showing summary of assessment scores listed in order of site sustainability performance (More → Less)

SITE	Overall site score (+ position)	SA obj 1 (Biodiversity) overall score	SA obj 2 (Land + soil) overall score	SA obj 3 (Water) overall score	SA obj 4 (Air/poll'n) overall score	SA obj 5 (Climate) overall score	SA obj 6 (Energy) overall score	SA obj 7 (Heritage) overall score	SA obj 8 (Landscape) overall score	SA obj 9 (Housing) overall score	SA obj 10 (Inc comms) overall score	SA obj 11 (Transport) overall score	SA obj 12 (Economic) overall score
HP Site 1	-6 (1 st)	--	--	--	--	-	0	--	--	+++	+++	--	+++

Stage 4 – Selection of Sites

Stage 4 enabled the results of the Sustainability Appraisal outcome to be qualitatively examined by consideration of sites in terms of their capability of supporting the Local Plan's objectives for each community – in particular the identified 'Place Shaping Priorities'. Stage 4 also provides discussion and analysis of the scale of growth that would be required to be drawn from the pool of the most sustainable site options, in or to meet the identified housing and employments needs for the settlement.

The outcome of Stage 4 refined the results of the Stage 3 Sustainability Appraisal and identified preferred sites that are more sustainable and support the Local Plan objectives.

Broad proposals were then developed for each of the preferred sites. Proposed uses were identified, including the infrastructure and mitigation necessary to enable development to proceed.

The outcome of Stage 4 of the site selection process for Amesbury can be summarised under the 'What development is proposed' section earlier in this paper; concluding that no sites have been identified for development at Amesbury over the Local Plan period. There is no strategic need to allocate, and the available sites identified at Amesbury were found to be subject to insurmountable negative impacts as identified through the Sustainability Appraisal making them unsuitable for allocation.

At High Post, while the potential site did not yield any major adverse effects through Sustainability Appraisal the site is spatially separate from Amesbury and Salisbury. The site is of a significant scale on land that rises from the south towards a high point within the local landscape on the northern part of the site. The open, rolling landscape setting and the Old Sarum scheduled monument have potential to be adversely impacted by significant growth on this site. However, a reduced, more moderate scale of growth is unlikely to be of a scale which could support a sustainable residential community without heavy reliance on the private car. Land at High Post is a Principal Employment Area which supports a range of locally important economic activities. There may be scope for modest future extension to the employment offer at High Post, should an identified need arise.

Stage 4 therefore concludes with no site allocations proposed as preferred sites at Amesbury or High Post.

The maps below illustrate the outcome of the site selection process at Amesbury and High Post.

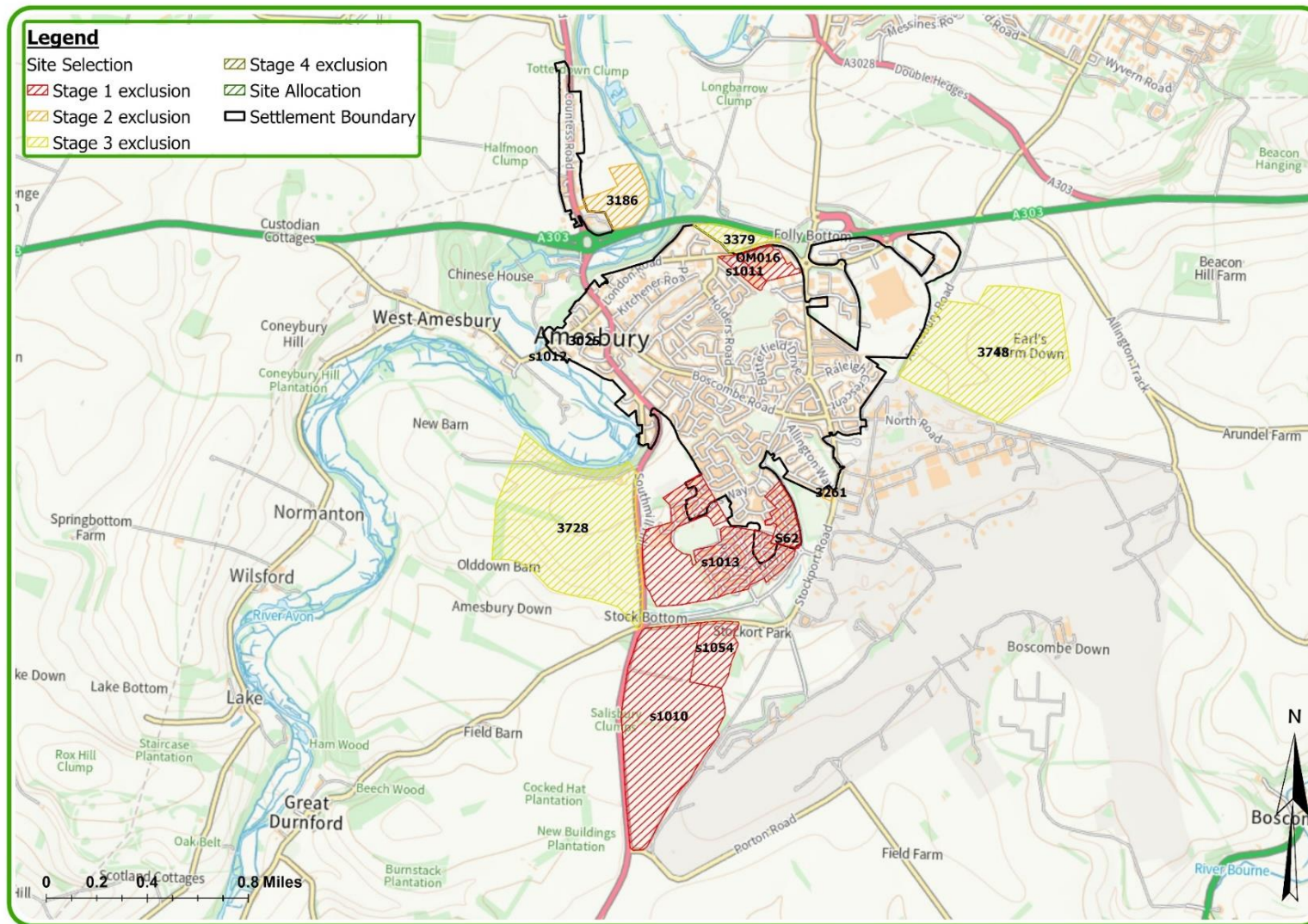


Figure 12. Site selection results in Amesbury

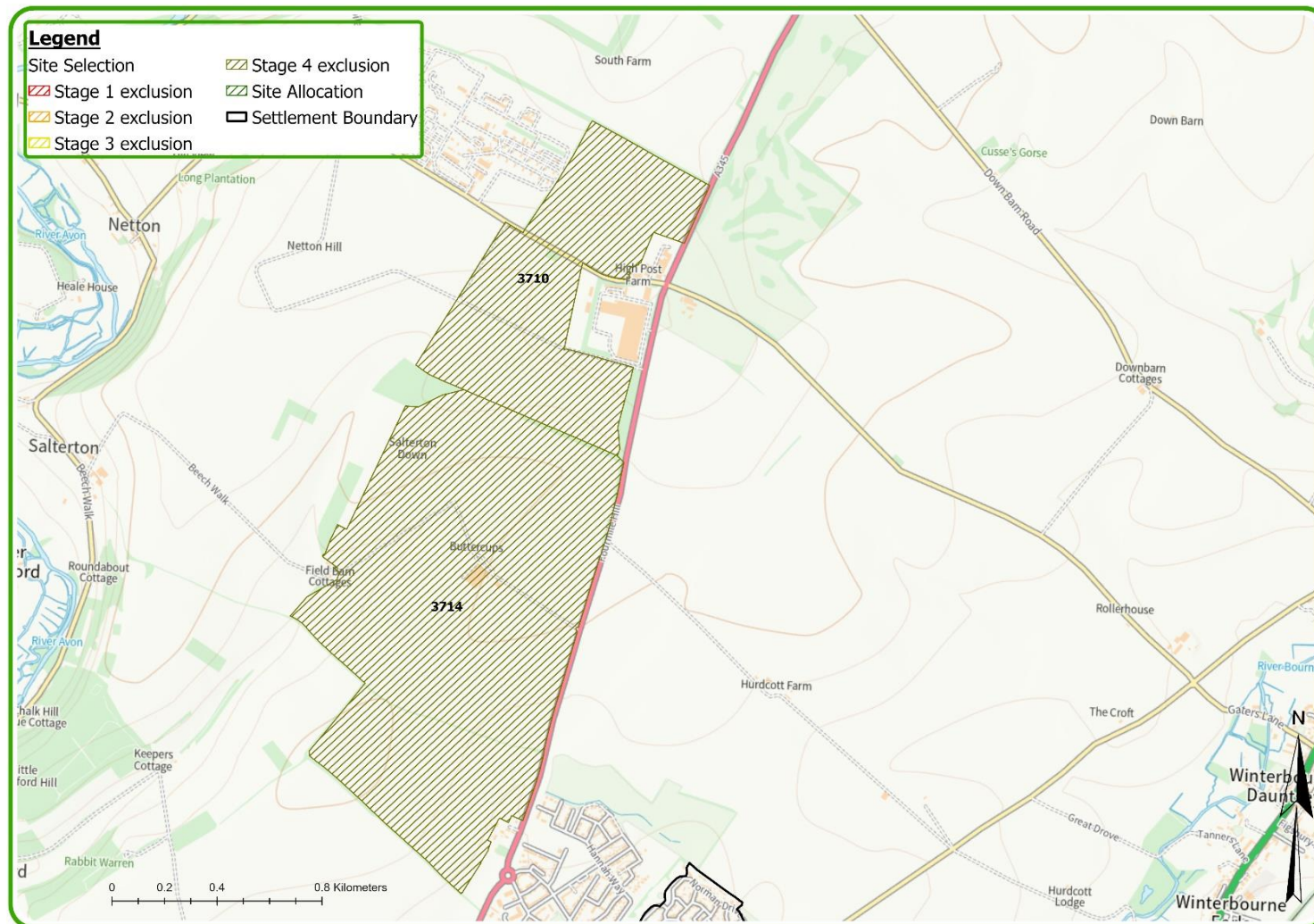


Figure 13. Site selection results at High Post.