



MELKSHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Mary Jarvis BA Hons. (Local Policy)

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28th March 2014

Dr. Carlton Brand,
Corporate Director,
Wiltshire Council,
County Hall,
TROWBRIDGE,
Wilts. BA14 8HD

Dear Dr Brand

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – ADJUSTMENTS TO THE
MELKSHAM TOWN AND MELKSHAM WITHOUT PARISHES**

Melksham Without Parish Council recently received a letter from Melksham Town Council to suggest that talks begin with a view to amalgamating our two parishes. This matter was discussed at a Special Meeting on 3rd March when my Council unanimously agreed NOT to pursue this invitation

I am therefore writing to emphasise that while as a Council we accept that a boundary revision is required to take in the new development east of Melksham which has been constructed mainly outside the current boundary of Melksham Town, my Council cannot see any reason at all to explore the amalgamation of the two Melksham parishes.

Melksham Without is primarily a rural parish with a variety of villages and communities. These range from such ancient settlements as Beanacre and Shaw to the more modern village of Bowerhill. All the settlements are separate from the town and are far more rural areas than the town and distinct as village communities.

Melksham Without Parish Council also wishes to emphasise its opposition to seeking to make Bowerhill and Berryfield part of the town. Both these villages are sustainable communities in their own right. Bowerhill for example has its own Community Hall, Sports Field, School, Shops, 2 play areas as well as many village community groups. Berryfield too has its own village hall and village association and allotments.

COALESCENCE THREAT - BOWERHILL & MELKSHAM

The Parish Council is particularly dismayed to find out in the last few days that consultation is taking place re possible development on the green land between Bowerhill and Melksham town. *See enclosed leaflet.* How has this been possible, given that at least half of this land was allocated in the West Wilts. Local Development Framework as recreational land? If development were to take place on the two fields being put forward, there would be complete coalescence of Bowerhill with the town; a situation vigorously opposed by the people of Bowerhill. The draft Core Strategy was also adjusted by the Inspector at its recent examination to ensure Bowerhill is cited as a village. It cannot remain a village if it has no visual green space around it.

My Council therefore seeks immediate confirmation from your Department that the past and present policies which are designed to protect this most important green visual gap between Bowerhill and the town are still in place and are being applied. How is that a proposed development between Bowerhill and Melksham is being put forward when the latest edition of the Core Strategy states 5.80 Pg 86 : *The identity of these separate communities will need to be preserved through the planning process. ?*

Such development too would also spoil the visual setting of The Spa buildings; one of Melksham's few historic settings. The Core Strategy 5.80 (Pg 86) also states: *Development at Melksham should protect the historic environment and in particular should protect the historic setting of The Spa.* Apart from one field being designated as recreational land in the WW Local Development Framework, both these fields are extremely important visually to retain an appropriate setting for the large Spa buildings that are surely the most prominent feature of Melksham as one drives along A365 toward the town.

Please would you therefore confirm as soon as possible and before our next Council Planning Meeting on 7th April that not only does Wiltshire Council recognise the importance of preventing any coalescence between Bowerhill village and the town but will be proactively opposing this development.

Thank you for your help in this matter. We look forward to hearing from you. Please note I am stepping down as Clerk today so please would you address your reply to the new Clerk Ms. Teresa Strange.
Yours sincerely,

Mary Jarvis
Clerk
Encl.

Copies to: John Watling, Deputy Returning Officer & Head of Electoral Services
Alistair Cunningham, Director Economic Dev. & Planning Services
Mike Wilmott, Senior Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council