

Planning for Melksham

Introduction

1. What will Melksham be like in the future?
 - How much should the town grow?
 - What priorities should we tackle?
 - Where should development take place?
2. Answers to these fundamental questions affect how the town develops over the next 15 years.
3. The Council is thinking about these questions in planning Wiltshire's future. It's an important stage in the Council's review of the current Wiltshire Core Strategy and the development of the Local Plan.
4. The Wiltshire Core Strategy is the basis for determining most planning applications. It also identifies land for development that provides for new homes, jobs and infrastructure for our growing communities whilst balancing the need to protect the environment. The Local Plan will continue this role and therefore help shape the places the community of Wiltshire live and work within.
5. The Council has come to some initial answers to these three questions. It is sharing them and wants your views.

Scale of growth

How much should the town grow?

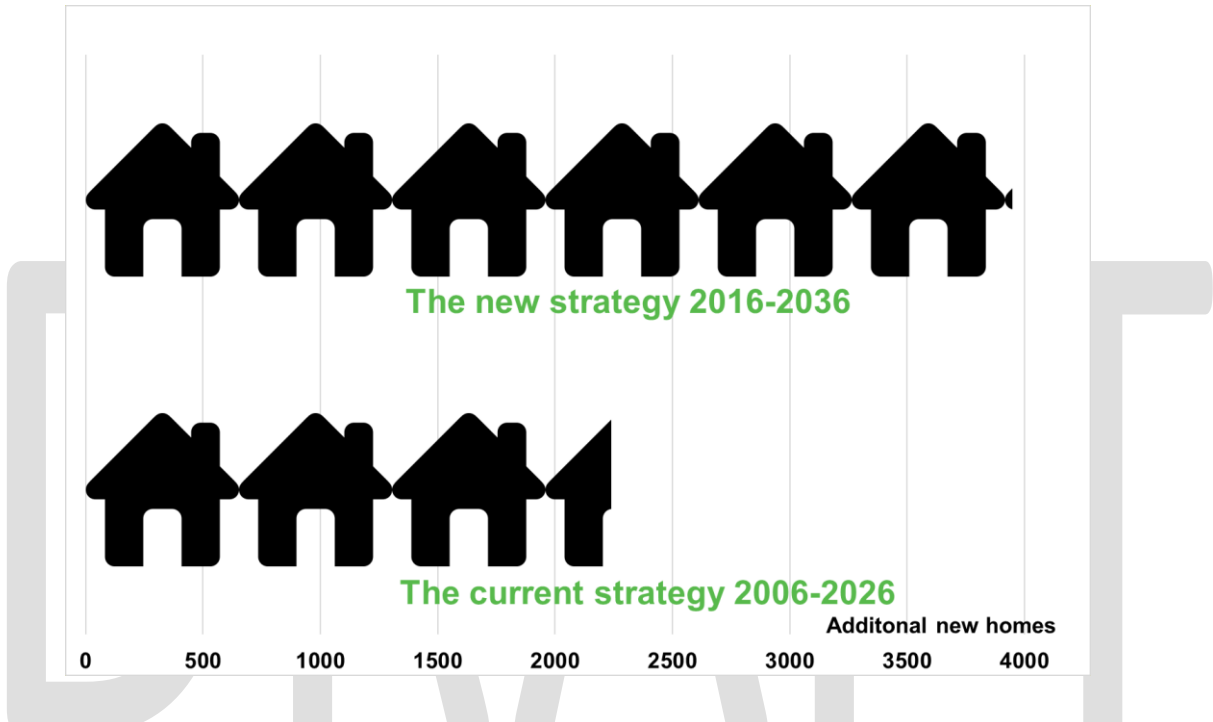
6. The Council assesses what amount of new homes are needed between 2016 and 2036, the period of the Local Plan. It does the same for how much land will be needed for new jobs and business. Detail on these requirements can be found in the 'Emerging Spatial Strategy' paper.

Additional homes

7. Assessments estimate levels of need for new homes within housing market areas as these reflect where the majority of the local population live and work, where the majority of home moves take place and where there is a common range of private sector rents.

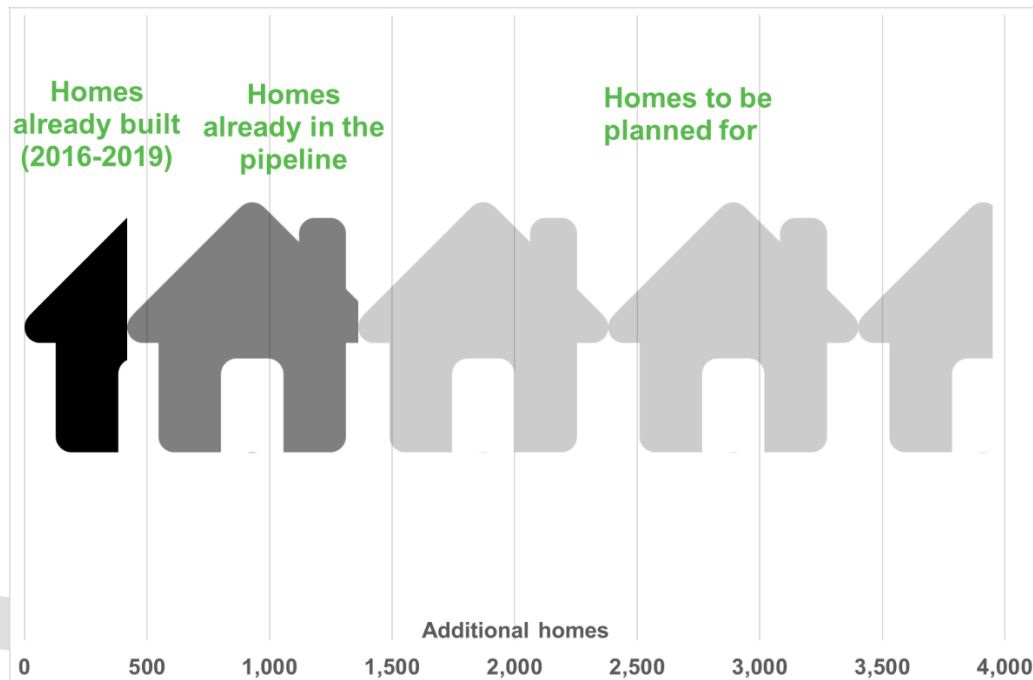
There are four housing market areas in Wiltshire and each area includes many settlements. Melksham is in the Chippenham Housing Market Area.

8. The Council has considered how best to accommodate the need for new homes, setting scales of growth by testing different distributions. The result of this work suggests the scale of growth should change from what is currently planned, as shown below:



9. The current strategy 2006-2026, the Wiltshire Core Strategy, identifies a requirement for 2240 homes. The new strategy proposes a requirement of 3950 homes for the plan period 2016-2036.
10. From this total estimate of need over the plan period can be deducted homes already built and those already in the pipeline as shown in the diagram below¹.

¹ In Melksham and Bowerhill, 420 dwellings have been built between 2016-2019 and at 1 April 2019, 943 homes are already in the pipeline i.e. they have planning permission or resolution to grant planning permission.



11. When the number of homes built and in the pipeline is deducted it leaves a further 2585 homes to be accommodated up until 2036. Both the Local Plan and neighbourhood plan can allocate sites for development. Each community is encouraged to help determine where development takes place through the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. The Local Plan will allocate land at Melksham where necessary to ensure a supply of deliverable land to meet strategic housing needs and for large or complex sites.
12. The emerging Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed immediately after it has been 'made'. This will be able to propose and allocate sites for development, for example, that meet a particular local housing need, for self-build homes, or other uses or that positively plan for brownfield sites.
13. Needs for development land should be met as far as possible on brownfield sites in order to help minimise the loss of greenfield land. The Council suggests that a target of 130 homes could be built on brownfield sites over the next 10 years².
14. The Local Plan must ensure that the proposed scale of growth will be accommodated. The Council must be certain that there is a land supply sufficient to meet assessed need. But the Council cannot rely on the brownfield target being met by as yet unidentified windfall redevelopment, the scale or timing of which is uncertain.
15. Planning positively for brownfield sites as part of reviewing the neighbourhood plan can however provide certainty about them coming forward, this will then reduce the amount of greenfield land needing to be planned for.
16. Alongside neighbourhood plans, development briefs for individual sites and master plans for larger areas are also a means for the community, with developers and

² Further detail can be found in the Emerging Spatial Strategy paper.

landowners, to help bring forward brownfield opportunities and achieve appropriate designs.

The Local Economy

17. The Council has assessed what additional land is needed for business in each of the economic zones of the County. These zones encompass many settlements. It has considered how best to accommodate needs for new business by testing different distributions³.
18. On current evidence, further employment land is not needed at Melksham. Land is already allocated in the existing Wiltshire Core Strategy. Employment land supply has been reviewed and the existing supply is available and is capable of meeting needs.

What do you think to this scale of growth? Should there be a brownfield target? Should they be higher or lower?

Place shaping priorities

What priorities should we tackle?

19. The Local Plan will contain a set of place shaping priorities for each main settlement. They play a central role in developing planning policies and proposals for development. They will be the basis for an overarching planning policy for Melksham that will guide development and the direction of growth.
20. Some priorities apply equally everywhere, notably the need to address climate change and achieve carbon reduction. Place shaping priorities are intended to be those distinct to a particular place. They may include:
 - Important local objectives or issues and how they can be addressed
 - Opportunities that have been identified that can help support a local community's vision
 - Infrastructure requirements for which there are local aspirations and capable of delivery or that are necessary to support likely future growth
21. They must relate to the development and use of land and so should revolve around specific outcomes and their benefits
22. They are also a starting point for policies that can be in neighbourhood plans. The Council will continue to work with Town and Parish Councils to find the priorities best suited to delivering sustainable development and town centre improvements. At this

³ Further detail can be found in the Emerging Spatial Strategy paper.

stage of the plan making process these are the draft priorities that have been identified for Melksham.

- Ensure town centre regeneration through continued investment in the town centre, maximising brownfield land and encouraging employment opportunities
- Out-commuting should be reduced through an improved employment offer
- An eastern bypass to the town is a priority to improve the efficiency of the transport network and lead to other benefits for the town
- To increase levels of train passenger transport and help reduce traffic congestion, railway station parking facilities should be improved and extended
- New development should be accompanied by sufficient healthcare facilities, schools and transport infrastructure which have come under increasing pressure in the town
- A holistic town-wide approach to ensure future education provision is required with sufficient primary and secondary school places provided to meet the needs of all new housing development
- Continue to safeguard a future route of the Wilts and Berks canal and to enable its delivery to provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits for Melksham.

QUESTIONS

Are these the right priorities? What priorities may be missing? How might these place shaping priorities be achieved?

Potential Development Sites

Where should development take place?

23. Land around much of Melksham and Bowerhill is being promoted for development by landowners or prospective developers. From this larger amount of land, the Council is focusing its own assessment on a smaller pool of potential development sites that are shown on the map below. How these sites have been chosen is explained in a separate 'site selection report', published alongside this document. Not all these sites will be needed to meet the housing requirement in Melksham and Bowerhill, further assessment will be carried out following the consultation to identify which site or site(s) will be proposed for allocation in the draft plan.
24. The Local Plan ensures the proposed scale of growth will be accommodated. The amount to be planned for takes account of development that is already certain and, in the pipeline, including as many brownfield sites as can be relied on, such as those with planning permission.
25. But If Melksham and Bowerhill is to expand, assuming all identified brownfield sites have been taken into account, the next difficult question focuses on where and how the built-up area may need to extend to accommodate change. Therefore, what will the role be for the release of greenfield land at Melksham and where is it most appropriate to consider development options.

26. Each potential development site has its own individual characteristics. Rarely is one site very clearly the best choice. There are a great range of different constraints and opportunities associated with each. Some are common to several or even all potential development sites. The information below also attempts to show what features, possibly both good and bad, set each one apart from others under consideration using current evidence. This pool of sites can be used to allocate sites in either the Local Plan or neighbourhood plan. One or more sites in whole or part will be selected and the rest of the pool of the potential development sites will remain as they are i.e. potentially available for consideration in any subsequent plan review. The results of this consultation might remove some sites, might restore others that were rejected or might even throw up new ones that have not so far been considered.
27. In Melksham and Bowerhill, a large amount of land is required in order to meet strategic housing requirements. The review of the neighbourhood plan can also consider whether further land is needed for development to meet the community's needs. One or more sites will be selected for housing in the Local Plan and the rest of the pool of potential development sites will remain as they are. In Melksham and Bowerhill, no land for employment development will be needed.
28. The Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan can select sites for development for new homes, business and other uses to meet local needs. Prioritising brownfield land, work would focus first on identifying opportunities using previously developed land. The pool of sites provided here is a starting point for any greenfield sites.

QUESTIONS

Is this the right pool of potential development sites? Are there any other sites we should be considering?

What land do you think is the most appropriate upon which to build? What type and form of development should be brought forward at the town?

Are there important social, economic or environmental factors you think we've missed that need to be considered generally or in respect of individual sites?

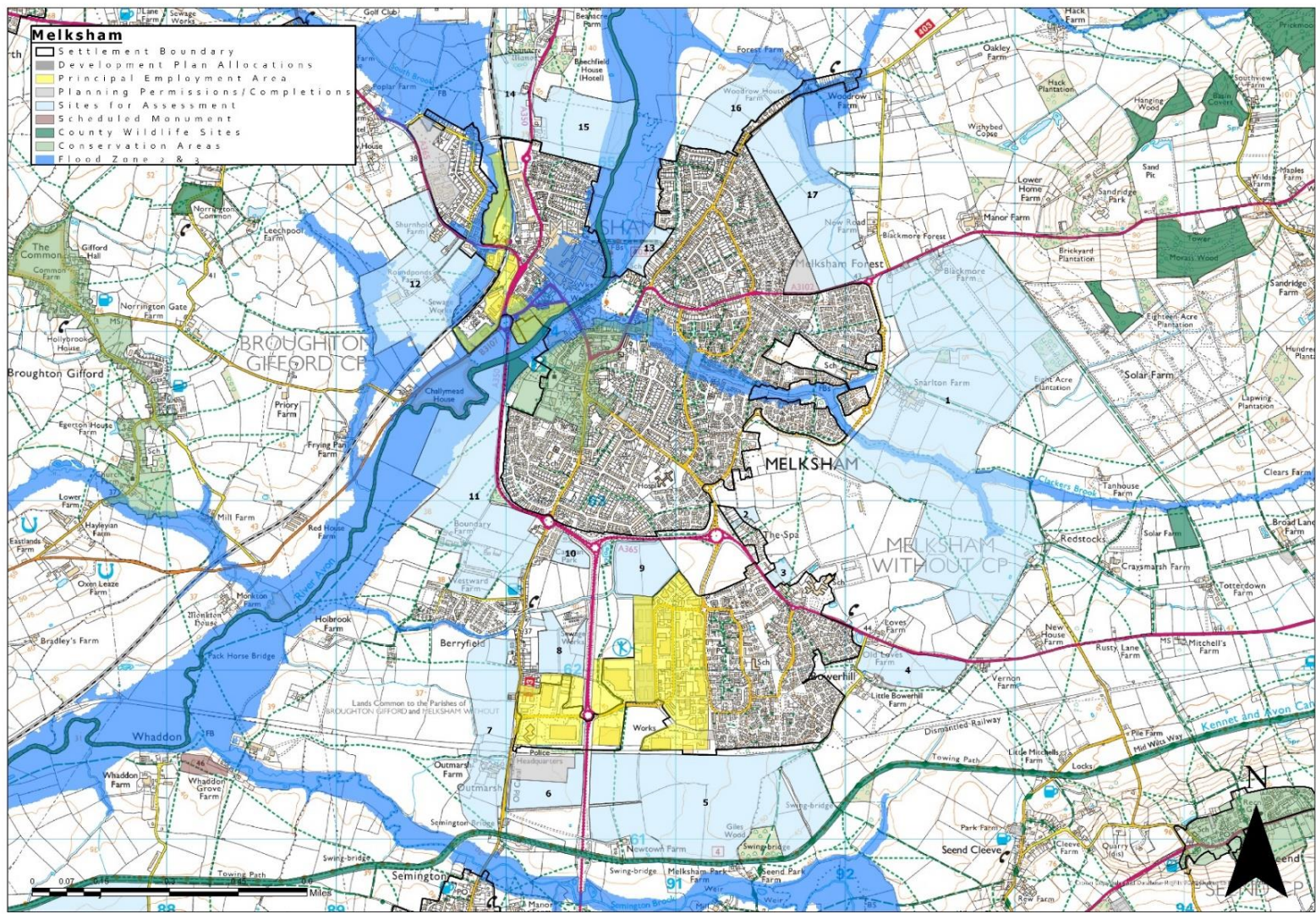


Figure 1 Map showing potential development sites for assessment

29. Seventeen potential sites have been identified in Melksham for further assessment of their development potential. Not all of these sites will be allocated for development. However, given the large amount of land that needs to be planned for at Melksham, several large sites may be required at this time. Key considerations for these potential site options are provided below.

Considerations relevant to all sites in Melksham:

- Sites should be connected to the town centre by methods other than private transport through the provision and promotion of sustainable transport and active travel, including new and improved bus routes and walking/cycling infrastructure
- Development in Melksham will need to positively contribute to finding solutions to traffic congestion in the town, through a combination of helping to reduce transport movements on local roads and through new transport infrastructure
- All development should positively support town centre regeneration, helping to ensure continued investment in the town centre.

Site 1: Land to the east of Melksham (SHELAA sites 3552, 3686, 3525, 3123)

- This is a large site which, if developed in full, may add significant pressure to the local highway network if built prior to major road infrastructure
- Site may require access to both A3102 in north and A365 in south
- There is an area of flood zones 2 and 3 associated with Clackers Brook running through the centre of the site
- Brown's Lane and Clackers Brook are significant Green Infrastructure corridors providing a connection from wider countryside through to the Bristol Avon river
- The site is exposed to views across from Sandridge Hill along with wider rural views to the east. However, being a large site, there is scope for mitigation

Site 2: 398a The Spa (SHELAA site 3249)

- Site only has access onto The Spa
- Developing this site may have potential impacts on the Grade II listed dwellings at The Spa

Site 3: Land adjacent to Woolmore Manor (SHELAA sites 1034, 3219)

- Site has access onto A365
- Potential impacts of developing this site on the Grade II* listed Woolmore Manor
- Northern part of site contains a high value great crested newt pond and connects with woodland habitat which is important supporting habitat for the pond

Site 4: Land to the east of Bowerhill (SHELAA sites 3345, 3331)

- Site has access onto the A365
- SHELAA 3331 could only come forward with 3345
- The site would be an urban encroachment into the rural setting between Bowerhill and Seend / Seend Cleeve which could prove difficult to mitigate
- Site may contain populations of great crested newt and bat roosts and hedgerows may be used for bat commuting

Site 5: Land to the south of Bowerhill (SHELAA sites 1005, 1006, 3603)

- Potential for site access onto A350
- Potential constraints to developing this site include the proximity of the A350 and to businesses at Bowerhill Industrial Estate
- The Kennet & Avon canal runs along the southern boundary of the site – an important wildlife corridor and recreational asset

Site 6: Land South of Hampton Park (SHELAA site 1004)

- Site has direct access onto Semington Road
- The northern part of the site is now the home of Wiltshire Air Ambulance which separates the rest of the site from the urban area
- Proximity of Wiltshire Air Ambulance and the A350 may have noise concerns for any future residents
- Former canal runs along the western side and is likely to be of significance for breeding great crested newts

Site 7: Land to the south of Berryfield (SHELAA sites 1002, 1003, 1019)

- Site has direct access onto Semington Road
- The site partly covers the alignment of the Melksham Link under WCS Core Policy 16 and land would need to be safeguarded to allow for the restoration of the Wilts & Berks canal
- The southern part of this site is remote from the town of Melksham and the northern part of the site is adjacent to the 'Small Village' of Berryfield which has its own character and is separate from Melksham
- Habitats around Outmarsh Farm and disused railway line may be important for bats and great crested newts

Site 8: Land to the north of Hampton Park West (SHELAA sites 699, 827600)

- Site has direct access onto Semington Road
- From a landscape perspective, the site may cause coalescence between Melksham and the village of Berryfield
- Constraints include the sites' proximity to Sewage Treatment Works and Hampton Business Park
- The wider area is likely to support great crested newts and the site may contribute to local populations through provision of terrestrial habitat

Site 9: Land South of Western Way (SHELAA site 1025)

- Direct access onto Western Way may be possible
- From a landscape perspective, development of this site could cause the coalescence of Bowerhill Industrial Estate with Melksham, however the site is large enough that some degree of separation could be maintained
- The site lies within a wider area which supports a metapopulation of great crested newts

Site 10: Land at Lonsdale Farm (SHELAA site 3455)

- Site has direct access onto the A350

- Access would need to be significantly improved too allow for a housing development on this site
- Proximity of the A350 may have noise and air quality impacts on future residents

Site 11: Land to the west of Melksham (SHELAA sites 3645, 728, 3105a/b/c/d)

- Access may be possible directly onto A350 or from Semington Road
- Land would need to be safeguarded to allow for the restoration of the Wilts & Berks canal (Melksham Link) as per Wiltshire Core Strategy
- Development in the southern part of the site may lead to coalescence with Berryfield which is a 'Small Village' with its own separate character
- Flood zones 2 and 3 cover a large proportion of the site in the north and west which would rule out development in that area
- Site abuts the River Avon CWS and Conigre Mead CWS

Site 12: Land to the west of Shurnhold (SHELAA sites 3310, 3352)

- Site has direct access onto Bath Road
- Developing this site would have potential heritage and landscape impacts
- The site has open views from Shurnhold Road and mitigation may be required to the west to reduce the impact of urban encroachment into the rural setting
- Possible harmful impacts on the settings of listed buildings
- There are areas of flood zone 2 and 3 to the east, south and west of the site
- The site is in close proximity to Sewage Treatment Works
- The site is separated from the rest of the urban area by the railway line

Site 13: Land to rear of Lowbourn Infants School (SHELAA site 1000)

- Access is possible via the roundabout onto the A3102
- There is an area of flood zone 2 and 3 along the western boundary of the site
- Murray Walk crosses the centre of the site
- Site may contain foraging and commuting habitats for bats

Site 14: Land north of Dunch Lane (SHELAA site 3243)

- Direct access could be achieved onto the A350
- Potential heritage impacts on Beanacre Manor and Beechfield House to the north
- From a landscape perspective the site's location would mean possible coalescence of Melksham with the village of Beanacre and urban encroachment into the countryside
- There are mature trees and hedgerows within the site and along the western boundary and a significant area of woodland in the north - high connectivity across the site confer high ecological value
- The railway line and A350 are in close proximity to the site
- There is a major power line crossing the centre of the site

Site 15: Land to the north of Melksham (SHELAA sites 187, 3405)

- Direct access could be achieved onto the A350
- Site 187 may not be available as there are existing businesses onsite
- Developing this site would have potential heritage and landscape impacts with the village of Beanacre and the listed Beechfield House to the north of the site
- There are areas of flood zone 2 and 3 to the east of the site associated with the Bristol Avon CWS

- There is a major power line crossing the north of the site

Site 16: Land off Woodrow Road (SHELAA sites 1001, 3107)

- Site has direct access onto Woodrow Road
- Site 1001 would need to be developed alongside 3107
- Woodrow Road leading into Melksham is often narrow and with traffic calming measures and not particularly suited to large increases in traffic
- There are areas of flood zone 2 and 3 to the north of the site
- There is a major power line crossing the south of the site
- Western boundary is the line of the old Wilts and Berks canal, now marked by hedgerows and likely to be a bat commuting route to the river.

Site 17: Land to the north of A3102 (SHELAA sites 715, 1027, 3478, 3479)

- Access could be achieved onto both A3102 and Woodrow Road
- There are areas of flood zone 2 and 3 to the north of the site
- Site has potential for commuting and foraging bats due to strong pattern of historical hedgerows and grazed pasture
- There is a major power line crossing the north of the site

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Settlement profiles

30. When planning for growth it is important to consider the characteristics of the town in terms of important services and infrastructure (green infrastructure, health, education, transport and utilities), as well as housing need and the local economy. The following profiles therefore summarise measures in place or being put in place to address known infrastructure issues and their timing, what additional provision would be needed to support growth and what other opportunities there may be.

QUESTIONS

Are there any other issues or infrastructure requirements that should be identified?

Topic	Comment
Education	<p>New provision would be required to meet early years needs arising through new housing development.</p> <p>Land for a new primary school has been secured on land south of Western Way, which will supply new places to the south of the town. New provision is required to meet needs in any other area.</p> <p>Melksham Oak is currently undergoing expansion. This is projected to fill. Additional expansion onsite would not be possible, but a satellite of Melksham Oak School could be possible in meeting needs arising from any new housing.</p>
Energy	<p>According to Scottish and Southern Electricity Network's (SSEN) Network Capacity Map, the substation and supply points in and around Melksham are currently unconstrained. Some of the infrastructure is unconstrained whereas some is partially constrained in relation to energy generation, according to SSEN's Generation Availability Map. This means new generators may require investment in the infrastructure to be able to connect to the grid.</p>
Green and Blue Infrastructure	<p>A multi-functional 'Local Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Network' has been identified and is shown on the map in Figure ii below. The Map indicates areas where improvements will need to be sought – i.e. in the form of functional and sufficiently scaled corridors within which the aim would be to consolidate and incorporate new green and blue spaces into the existing GBI networks.</p> <p>The map in Figure iii below identifies biodiversity and heritage assets which are also GBI assets. These features are important waypoints within the existing landscape and should be considered as being integral to how new development areas are sensitively planned.</p>

Topic	Comment
Sport and Leisure Facilities	<p>At Melksham and Bowerhill there is a need for the following, as identified by the Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst grass pitches for Melksham and Bowerhill are sufficient, Bowerhill Recreation Ground will need upgrading / improvement. • Oakfields is the new home of Melksham Town Football Club and Rugby Club which houses a sufficient number of quality grass pitches. However, a 4G ATP will be needed here. • The Melksham House site is the home of Melksham Cricket Club, where a new pavilion has been provided for the club as part of the campus programme, and the new home of the yet to be built Health & Well Being Centre. The H&WBC is due to be completed in 2022. • All further development would be asked for a contribution to the new Leisure Centre, improvements to existing sites, and new 4G ATP at Woolmore Farm. <p>Leisure Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for Melksham Community Campus are well underway with construction due to be completed in 2022. The new facility will comprise a swimming pool, learner pool, fitness suite, spin studio, café, library, community spaces, meeting rooms and Melksham Without Town and Parish Council Offices. There are no further plans for additional leisure facilities.
Health	<p>There are two GP surgeries in Melksham. A third GP surgery closed in 2020 due to a lack of resources. The two remaining surgeries both have capacity issues. Consideration may need to be given to improving capacity in the future.</p>
Housing needs	<p>In the years 2016-2036 the older population is expected to increase by 26% in the 60-74 age group and 83% in the 75+ age group. At the same time the 0-14 age group is expected to decrease by 3% and the 15-29 age group to increase by 4%. Finally, the 30-44 age group is expected to not change and the 45-59 age group to decrease by 16%</p> <p>Local household income</p> <p>The annual average gross income is £32,800 and the net income after housing costs is £22,700.</p> <p>Affordability Ratio (based on 2 bed property)</p> <p>Median price £171,000</p> <p>Annual gross income £32,800</p> <p>Affordability ratio 5.21</p>
The local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High concentration of jobs in manufacturing, with recent major investments at Bowerhill, including the consolidation of Herman Miller's UK manufacturing at its purpose-built Portal Mill facility,

Topic	Comment
	<p>and further warehousing/office expansion by Gompels Healthcare and upgrading of hangers for logistic distribution business. Build out of Hampton Park employment area in recent years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market interest in town. • Low levels of unemployment • Capacity within labour market to accommodate future growth, according to population statistics • There is a very limited supply of employment sites and premises available in Melksham • Several brownfield sites in the town which provide good regeneration opportunities • Town centre vacancies are below the national average. • No capacity for additional convenience retail floorspace, but a small capacity for comparison retail floorspace up to 2036.
Transport	<p>Key features</p> <p>Melksham is well served by the A350 primary route which provides a direct link to Chippenham (and the M4 at Junction 17) and Trowbridge. Other key routes provide access to Bath (A365), Calne (A3102), Devizes (A365) and Bradford on Avon (B3107). Bus routes provide regular services to Bath, Chippenham, Trowbridge and Devizes with most services accessed from the Market Place in the town centre.</p> <p>Current constraints/local concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confluence of A350 and other radial routes (A365, A3102 and B3107) causes significant peak hour congestion and delays particularly in central section of A350 through the town. • Future development growth may increase pressure on the A350 through Melksham and at congestion hot spots such as Farmers Roundabout. This in turn may lead to further rat running through residential and rural roads. • While the TransWilts train service has been significantly improved over the past few years, it is still only a two-hourly service between Westbury and Swindon. • Currently poor environment around Melksham rail station and walking routes to town centre. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current joint working between TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, Network Rail, Great Western Railway and Wiltshire Council to develop and enhance Melksham rail station, forecourt, parking and facilities. • Further development and delivery of an A350 Melksham bypass would relieve peak time congestion and delays.

Topic	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="478 253 1372 436">• Bypassing Melksham would also reduce severance between the town centre and areas to the west of the A350 (including the rail station and recent supermarket developments), create an opportunity to re-design the existing A350 corridor through the town, and support efforts to regenerate the town centre.<li data-bbox="478 443 1372 589">• An agreed Melksham rail station masterplan that facilitates joint working between TransWilts Community Rail, Network Rail, Great Western Railway and Wiltshire Council to develop and enhance Melksham rail station, forecourt, parking and facilities.

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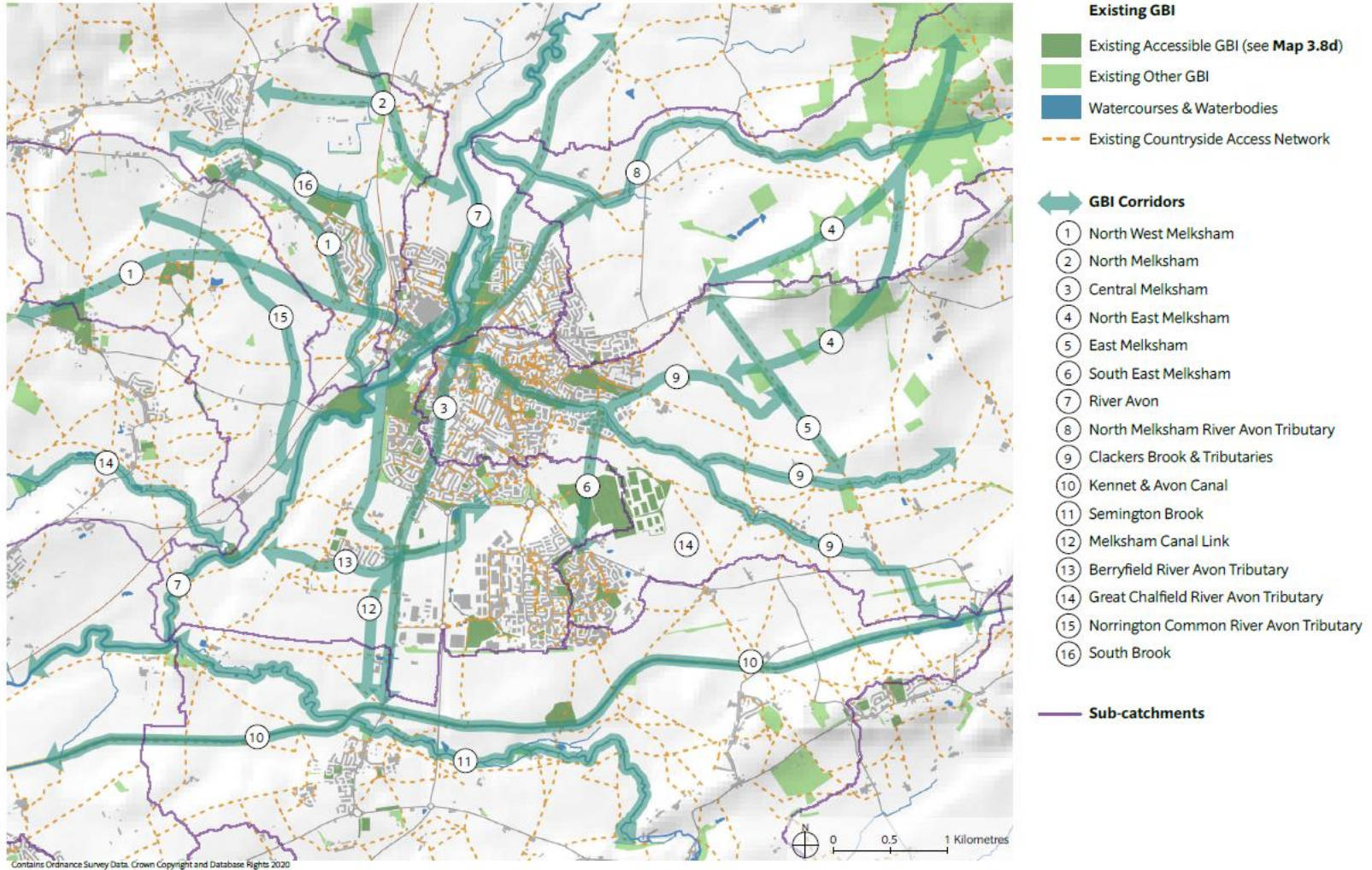


Figure 2 Map showing Melksham and Bowerhill Green and Blue Infrastructure Network and improvement corridors (numbered). (These are draft plans from the emerging Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and may change)

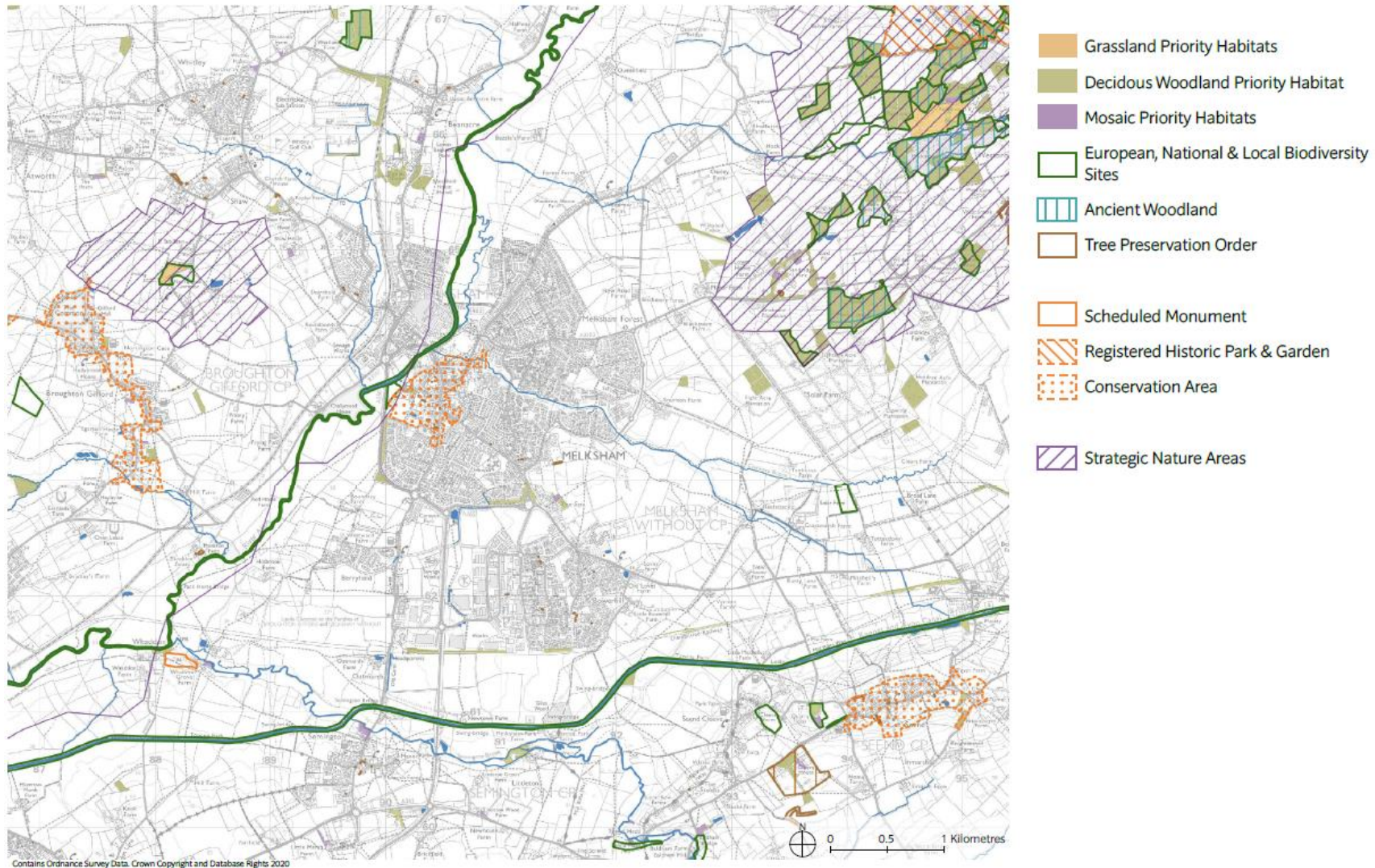


Figure 3 Map showing Melksham and Bowerhill Green and Blue Infrastructure Assets in relation to Biodiversity and Heritage. (These are draft plans from the emerging Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and may change)