

For immediate release

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Council bids for Government funding to support Melksham and Trowbridge

Wiltshire Council has submitted bids of more than £14m of Government funding to help support two projects in Melksham and Trowbridge that, if successful, will provide opportunities and improvements for both towns.

The bids are part of the Government's Levelling Up Fund, which aims to invest in infrastructure projects that improve everyday life across the UK. The £4.8bn fund will support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets.

One of the bids, of around £5m, is to support the council's plans to refurbish Melksham House. The plan is to renovate Melksham House as a multifunctional hub for the local community, while ensuring the building's cultural and historical importance are maintained.

The provision of flexible workspaces will help support local businesses as the county emerges from the COVID-19 crisis. A new flexible workplace and community hub would also reduce the town's exposure to losses of local employment opportunities, reduce out of town commuting and provide a base for workers looking for a collaborative, co-working environment. The house would also include multi-purpose community space.

Set alongside the new Melksham Campus, this project would help that area become a centre of activity for the town, driving footfall and business opportunity to the area. Any plans would be subject to the normal planning process, with residents and stakeholders able to provide feedback and comments.

Money from this bid will also help fund active travel and sustainable measures in the town, which will make the area more accessible and improve connectivity.

The council's bid for this funding has the support of Michelle Donelan MP and Melksham Town Council.

Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of Wiltshire Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said of the Melksham bid: "We know the historic importance of

Melksham House and we believe this investment will ensure it continues to be a vital long-term part of the town's future and help support the local area to thrive.

“With Melksham Campus being built on the same site of the house, this area of Melksham will be a real focal point for the town, providing top-class facilities for residents and businesses alike. If we're successful, this will not only bring forward the plans we had for Melksham House, but also support travel and accessibility measures, which will really complement our overall vision.

“With the town lacking in office space and a likely shift in how people work following the pandemic, we believe the offer of flexible workspaces that cater to local businesses, that form part of our proposals could be an attractive proposition.

“Town centres have been hit hard by the pandemic but ambitious plans such as these will help to reinvigorate them. We look forward to sharing more information on the Melksham proposals in due course and we welcome people's thoughts.”

The second of the council's bids for the Levelling Up Fund is for around £9.4m for changes around Trowbridge Longfield Gyratory to improve capacity and allow for smoother journeys along the A361 and for easier access to central Trowbridge.

In addition to this, there is a network of walking and cycling improvements proposed, including improved crossings at the gyratory (for pedestrian and cyclists); a shared use path along County Way East; shared use paths connecting to advisory cycle lanes on Bythesea Road for connections to the station; and improved pedestrian connections between the Longfield residential area and Cradle Bridge Retail Centre and Trowbridge town centre.

The new connections would facilitate much easier access to the town centre for residents, improving their access to local facilities and services. This would also allow them to benefit from town centre improvements to be delivered as part of the Future High Streets Fund, ensuring that all residents can experience benefits from town improvements and levelling up in Trowbridge.

Commenting on the Trowbridge Longfield Gyratory bid, Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, said: “These proposals will really help provide much easier access to the town centre for residents, and therefore improve their access to local facilities and services.

“With the work we're planning as part of the Future High Streets Fund, if we're successful with this bid too, it means that more people will be able to benefit from the improvements we are planning in the town centre. We want our county town to be a thriving accessible area and these proposals will not only improve the lives of local residents, but also encourage businesses to invest.”

The council's bid for this funding has the support of Andrew Murrison MP and Trowbridge Town Council.

The council expects to hear the outcome of the bids by the autumn.

The Levelling Up Fund has other application windows and the council will consider future bids for further funding for different projects.

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