

## Teresa Strange

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**From:** Teresa Strange  
**Sent:** 26 February 2026 17:42  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Clarification Request – January 2024 Meeting Referenced in D&A Statement (PL/2024/12307)

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to your recent correspondence, please find my replies below in **red**.

Please note that I have treated this latest correspondence as a request made under the Freedom of Information Act. It has therefore been logged as FOI 004/26.

In accordance with best practice guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), your request and this response (anonymised) will be published on the Parish Council's website, so that the information is available in the wider public interest.

With kind regards, Teresa

Teresa Strange  
Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer  
Melksham Without Parish Council  
First Floor  
Melksham Community Campus  
Market Place, Melksham  
Wiltshire, SN12 6ES  
01225 705700  
[www.melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk](http://www.melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk)

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 21 February 2026 22:14

**To:** Teresa Strange <clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Clarification Request – January 2024 Meeting Referenced in D&A Statement (PL/2024/12307)

Dear Teresa,

Thank you for your email of 4 February 2026.

While my property falls within the Melksham civil parish area, I consider that I would be affected by the proposed development, along with the wider community, given the scale of the industrial development proposed for this site.

Thank you for your clarification, my point was in relation to which councillors represent you, and that is Melksham Town councillors and not Melksham Without Parish councillors.

I am genuinely interested in how you feel you would be affected by the proposed development, as you have disclosed you live in the centre of town.

I have reviewed the applicant's Design & Access Statement. On page 30 it states that "regular discussions" took place with Melksham Without Parish Council, that councillors "offered their support for the proposed relocation to the application site," and that a "formal meeting" was held with councillors in January 2024 which "solidified their backing."

For the sake of clarity and accuracy of the public record, I would be grateful if you could confirm:

1. whether such a meeting took place in January 2024; **Yes**
2. the date of the meeting and which councillors attended; **31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. The councillors who attended were:**

**Councillor Richard Wood (Chair of Planning Committee)**  
**Councillor Alan Baines (Vice Chair of Planning Committee)**  
**Councillor John Glover (Chair of Council)**  
**Councillor David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council)**  
**Councillor Mark Harris (Planning Committee member)**  
**Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder (Bowerhill)**

3. whether any minutes, notes, or formal record of that meeting exist;

**Yes**

4. whether any expression of support for the proposed relocation to the application site was made at that meeting; and

**This was a pre application meeting and not a formally called meeting in the public domain and therefore not a decision making forum or meeting. Gompels had held discussions with Wiltshire Council on a variety of sites and had been encouraged to engage with the parish council on their thoughts on the top 3 sites; of which the application site was one.**

5. *whether the applicant's characterisation of that meeting as having "solidified" councillor backing accurately reflects the council's position at that time.*

*The parish council did not express either support or objection to the site, as noted above, its wasn't a formal meeting for that type of decision to be made.*

*Separately, and in light of your earlier correspondence, I would also be grateful if you could confirm whether the broader governance issue previously raised will now be considered before any further engagement by the Parish Council in relation to this application, and whether any such consideration will be recorded.*

*I have contacted the Monitoring Officer again to ask him if there is anything that should have been considered, he has not replied to date.*

*I have also contacted the County Officer for WALC (Wiltshire Association for Local Councils) who provide legal advice to the parish council and this is their response:*

*"A central point of public concern appears to be the historical provision of a free meeting venue by the applicant. Under the **Model Code of Conduct** and the **Localism Act 2011**, it is essential to distinguish between personal interests and corporate council benefits.*

- **Individual vs. Corporate Interests:** Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and Other Registerable Interests (ORIs) apply to individual councillors and their personal or financial connections. If the free meeting venue was provided to the Parish Council as a corporate body for the purpose of conducting official business, it does not constitute a personal DPI for individual members unless a specific councillor personally benefited from the arrangement.*
- **Gifts and Hospitality:** While councillors must register personal gifts or hospitality valued at over £50, gifts made clearly to the council (such as the use of a building for meetings) are generally recorded for audit purposes in the council's own records rather than in individual councillor registers.*
- **Bias and Predetermination:** The courts have established that a "fair-minded and informed observer" test must be applied to determine if a decision was tainted by bias. Historical community relationships between a council and a local business do not automatically result in predetermination, provided members approach the specific planning application with an open mind. The Localism Act 2011 clarifies that councillors are entitled to have and express views on local issues without being deemed to have a closed mind.*

*The Parish Council's role as a statutory consultee is to provide a "collective view" to the planning authority based on the merits of the application. Decisions and comments must be based on "material considerations," which include the local development plan, planning history, and the economic impact of the proposal. The support for "continued and potential new employment opportunities" is a valid material planning consideration. NALC guidance emphasises that councillors must understand that personal feelings about an applicant are irrelevant; the focus must remain strictly on the wider public interest. By basing their comments on policy and employment factors, the Council has acted in accordance with the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and standard local government practice.*

*Based on the provided information, the Parish Council appears to have acted appropriately by:*

- 1. Focusing its consultation response on **material planning considerations** (employment and policy).*

2. Following its **standard procedures** for commenting as a statutory consultee.
3. Treating the historical venue provision as a **corporate relationship** rather than a personal conflict of interest, which is consistent with the legal framework for non-pecuniary interests.

*You should consider publishing a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) or a formal statement on the Council website that clearly outlines the policy-based reasons for its response to PL/2024/11426 and clarifies the nature of the historical corporate relationship with the applicant to ensure maximum transparency and address public misconceptions directly."*

As the parish council's "policy based reasons" for its response are published in the minutes of the meeting when it met to consider this planning application, and on the Wiltshire Council portal, I consider that published.

As the parish council follow good practice to publish the FOI requests they have on their website, the historic corporate relationship is published as part of a recent FOI request, as well as being in the Minutes of council meeting when the use of the meeting venue was agreed.

**As the parish council has sought legal advice from their paid professional body, and they have confirmed that the parish council acted appropriately, I do not feel that this needs to be considered.**

*This request is made simply to ensure clarity regarding the council's approach and the accuracy of statements made within the application documentation.*

***For the sake of good order I have attached the full D&A statement pdf***

*Yours sincerely,*

