

MINUTES of the Planning Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council held on Monday 17th March 2025 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices (First Floor), Melksham Community Campus, Market Place, SN12 6ES at 7:00pm

Present: Councillors Richard Wood (Committee Chair), John Glover (Council Chair), David Pafford (Council Vice-Chair), Alan Baines (Committee Vice-Chair), Peter Richardson and Mark Harris

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk)

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder (Bowerhill) attended the first part of the meeting.

There were 2 members of the public at the meeting who were observing, and none attending remotely via Zoom.

463/24 Welcome, Housekeeping and Announcements:

Councillor Wood welcomed everyone to the meeting. As a new member of the public was present at the meeting, the housekeeping message was read out. Everyone present was aware that the meeting was being recorded and would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved.

The Clerk reminded those present that they were now in the “Pre-election period of heightened sensitivity” in the run up to the Elections on Thursday 1st May.

There had been new information added to the application for Gompels warehouse [PL/2024/11426](#): **Land to the South of A365 Bath Road and West of Turnpike Garage** earlier in the day that Wiltshire Council was now consulting on. This was covered by the standing agenda item relating to that application, but as the notification had only gone out today, the parish council would be considering a response at the next Planning Committee meeting on Monday 7th April, before the deadline on Monday 14th April.

464/24 Apologies:

Councillor Martin Franks had an urgent family matter to attend and had tendered his apologies, these were accepted.

465/24 Declarations of Interest: None declared.

466/24 Dispensation Requests for this Meeting: None requested.

467/24 Parish Council standing dispensations relating to planning applications:

It was noted that the parish council has a dispensation lodged with Wiltshire Council to deal with S106 agreements relating to planning applications within the parish.

468/24 To consider holding items in Closed Session due to confidential nature:

The Clerk suggested that agenda item 8c be in a closed session as related to advice from the Neighbourhood Plan consultants as developers would be able to hear any deliberations. Agenda item 8f as commercially sensitive information to be discussed. Agenda item 10b as the enforcement could be the start of legal action. Agenda item 11a)iii) as the Confidential notes to accompany the Minutes of the last Neighbourhood Plan steering group, and 12a)i) to be held in closed session as to discuss the ongoing financial negotiations with Gleesons for a potential community centre funding contribution from the Blackmore Farm application.

Resolved: Agenda items 8c, 8f, 10bm 11a)iii) and 12 a)i) to be held in closed session.

469/24 Public Participation:

The Council suspended Standing Orders for a period of public participation.

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder was attending the meeting to listen to the discussions regarding applications in the Bowerhill Ward.

In his role as cabinet member for Highways he was aware of the ongoing enforcement issues on Westlands Lane (agenda item 10a). He had also been assured that a roundabout was replacing the proposed T junction on the A3102 for planning application PL/2024/10345 Land north of the A3102 (New Road Farm) but was yet to see any new drawings. This was due to the inconsistency of pre-application advice given.

Wiltshire Council were not aware of any movement in the site being taken to market for the Land south of Western Way (PL/2022/08504).

An update was given on the Public Open Space land at Pathfinder Place, which was weather dependent. The remedial works; gravel path and remaining landscaping, is due to be completed by the end of March, with sign off required by Wiltshire Council to confirm that the Public Open Space has been completed as required, this will be end of March, early April. Taylor Wimpey will then conduct a site inspection with the management company Remus, before handover to them, expected mid April, followed by the land transfer. There are still some issues with the adoption of assets by Wessex Water, with no timeframe in place yet. There are three offsite highways works to be finished, before completion sign off, expected in March/April. On site highways works are more complicated with a conflict of drawings of highway land vs front gardens with a recent site meeting and a way forward agreed, this relates to Wiltshire Council's ability to inspect underground services in the future.

The meeting reconvened.

470/24 Planning Applications: The Council considered the following applications and made the following comments:

- a) [PL/2025/01259](#): **Land at Norrington Lane, Shaw, Melksham, Wiltshire:** The Erection of an Equestrian Stabling Barn, the Erection of an Outdoor Riding Arena (Manège), the Siting of a Muck Heap Trailer, the Installation of an Access Track, and the Change of Use of the Land to Equestrian for Private Use. Applicant: J Bollen **Comments by: 18th March 2025.**

Comments: No objection

- b) [PL/2025/01290](#): **71B School Lane, Shaw, Melksham, SN12 8EJ:** Single storey side extension to provide a double garage, wc and office with room in loft. Applicant: Mr P Bennett. **Comments by: 18th March 2025.**

Comments: No objection but request a condition that the extension cannot be converted to a separate dwelling at a later date. The parish council note that there are comments from the neighbours with concerns of overlooking at the rear from the dormer window and therefore suggest the inclusion of obscured glass to the window, or a change to a roof Velux window to overcome that concern. It is noted that there has been internal property flooding in School Lane in the past, and the volunteer flood wardens have been asked to look at the application and comment if appropriate, due to the increase of hard surface.

- c) [PL/2025/01653](#): **40 Locking Close, Bowerhill, Melksham, SN12 6XR:** Proposed Single Storey Side Extension. Applicant: Mr Runnacles. **Comments by: 19th March 2025.**

Comments: No objection

- d) [PL/2025/01044](#): **1 Wellesley Close, Bowerhill, Melksham, Wilts, SN12 6XT:** Two storey side extension. Applicant: Mr & Mrs Joseph & Emily Guest. **Comments by 27th March 2025.**

Comments: No objection

- e) [PL/2025/02015](#): **THE WILLOWS, LOWER WOODROW, FOREST, MELKSHAM, SN12 7RB:** Construction of a new garage and home office and associated change of use of paddock land to residential curtilage. Applicant: Mr & Mrs Fletcher. **Comments by: 3rd April 2025.**

Comments: No objection but request a condition that the garage building/office cannot be converted to a separate dwelling at a later date.

471/24 Amended Plans/Additional Information: The Council considered the following revised/amended plans/additional information and made the following comments:

- a) [PL/2024/07097](#): **Land south of Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, SN12 7QP:** Erection of up to 300 dwellings (Class C3); land for local community use or building (incorporating Classes E(b), E(g) and F2(b) and (c)); open space and dedicated play space and service infrastructure and associated works on and South of Snarlton Farm (Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for two pedestrian and vehicle accesses (excluding internal estates roads) from Eastern Way) - Resubmission of PL/2023/07107). Applicant: Catesby Estates Promotions Limited.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – new Design & Access Statement Addendum – A Guide for Placemaking **Comments by: 21st March 2025.**

The Clerk reported that this new document provides details of a proposed community centre of which the parish council have consistently been stating that they do not wish to see three community centres in the live applications to the east of Melksham, and confirmed at the end of January that land had been secured for a large centre for the wider community on the Blackmore Farm site to the north. This included writing to the Planning Officer and Catesby to ask for a financial contribution to this community centre in the north if Wiltshire Council were minded to approve the application, notwithstanding the strong objection to the speculative application as it was not plan led.

She had spoken to the developer from Catesby and they offered to meet and discuss the placemaking document with the parish council, and were happy to just provide a financial contribution to a community centre. A meeting would also give the opportunity for discussion of alternative uses for the community land in this application. Wiltshire Council did have a deadline of Friday 21st March for comments on this revised information, and so it would be useful to still send in some comments as part of that formal process at this stage.

The Clerk had mentioned, as a “wild card” possibility with Catesby, but stressed it was not with the agreement of the parish council at this stage, that there was currently an identified need for two 3G pitches in the new Wiltshire Council Playing Pitch Strategy and this had been offered originally by the site owner, and might be a good site as Oakfields football and rugby club bordered the site to the south. There were complications due to the requirement for changing rooms, and perhaps floodlights and this would need further investigation.

Comments:

The parish council were surprised to see this new Design Access Statement addendum featuring a community building, at the request of officers in a Design Review Panel held on 18th February 2025. The parish council’s comments in September 2024 explained that there were other opportunities for a community centre in adjacent sites with live planning applications, and on 31st January 2025 confirmed that land had been secured for one large community centre to serve the

wider community, at the Strategic Committee meeting the week before, on the neighbouring Blackmore Farm site. Therefore, the parish council were only requesting a financial contribution to that community centre, rather than land and a contribution/building on this Snarleton Farm application – notwithstanding the parish council's objection to this speculative application.

To that end, the parish council reiterate that should Wiltshire Council be minded to approve this application that they would like to be involved in discussions with Wiltshire Council and Catesby regarding a proportionate financial contribution for a community centre in the site to the north provided by Gleasons. They also would like to enter into discussions for an alternative use on the community land on this planning application. The parish council have engaged with Catesby and are accepting their invitation to meet with them and discuss the place making elements of this application in the new addendum, and to investigate alternative community uses of the land indicated.

The parish council are also taking the opportunity to reiterate their request to be considered for first refusal on the allotments and equipped play areas, but not the wider public open space; if Wiltshire Council are minded to approve the application.

The newly produced document, the Design & Access Statement Addendum, still talks to 30% affordable housing and not 40% as per the draft Local Plan currently at Examination and as per the precedent of the sites to the north for Blackmore Farm (500 dwellings) and New Road Farm (295 dwellings).

472/24 Current planning applications: Standing item for issues/queries arising during period of applications awaiting decision.

a) PL/2024/10674: Land off Woodrow Road, Woodrow Road, Melksham, SN12 7AY Outline application with all matters reserved except for access for the development of up to 70 dwellings, open space, ecological enhancements, play space, associated infrastructure (including drainage structures and works to the public highway), access, parking, servicing and landscaping. Applicant: Waddeton Park Ltd

The members discussed the new comments from the Waste Officer regarding the swept path analysis which had been raised as a concern. The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust had objected to the application as it was on the route of the historic canal line. Both the Trust and the Rights of Way Officer had pointed out that the historic route had been drawn incorrectly on the plans and therefore would compromise the Wessex Water assets required for the development. The Rights of Way Officer had also raised some concerns about the impact to the newly created RoW to the south. The applicant had not yet responded to the Highways objections.

b) PL/2024/10345: Land north of the A3102, Melksham (New Road Farm) The construction of 295 homes; public open space, including formal play space and

allotments; sustainable drainage systems; and associated infrastructure; with 0.4ha of land safeguarded for a nursery. The principal point of access is to be provided from a new northern arm on the existing Eastern Way/A3102 roundabout junction, with a secondary access onto the A3102. Additional access points are proposed for pedestrians and cyclists. Applicant: Bloor Homes South West

The members noted that there were new Ecology comments, and extensive detailed comments from the Urban Design Officer who had objected; it was noted that this is a Full planning permission application, and not just Outline. Members noted that the new Wiltshire Design Guide was being rigorously applied and that mention was made of the Melksham Design Guide.

- c)C PL/2024/09725: Land off Corsham Road, Whitley, Melksham (Planning application** Outline planning application (with access, layout and landscaping to be approved) for up to 22 dwellings, new access off Corsham Road, public open space, drainage and associated works. **To note update on request for conditions by parish council.**

This was held in closed session at the end of the meeting.

- c) [PL/2025/00626](#): Land North of Berryfield Lane, Melksham, SN12 6DT:** Outline planning application for up to 68 dwellings and formation of new access and associated works (All matters reserved other than access).

Members noted the new comments from Public Protection, the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, Landscape officer, Drainage team and Highways Officer. It was noted that the application has been called in by Councillor Jonathon Seed as requested.

The developers, Tor & Co, had approached the parish council to meet with them, as encouraged at the January Strategic Committee meeting as it's the same developer agent as Blackmore Farm.

Recommendation: To arrange to meet with Tor & Co to discuss the planning application further.

Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder left the meeting.

- d) [PL/2024/11426](#): Land to the South of A365 Bath Road and West of Turnpike Garage, Melksham, Wilts:** Construction of warehouse with office space, parking and associated landscaping including site access.

There were no new comments on the application from statutory consultees, but there were new documents uploaded, and this is the additional information that Wiltshire Council are reconsulting on, this will be considered at the next Planning Committee meeting on Monday 7th April.

The site plan had been updated at the request of the Planning Officer, to remove the indicative roundabout associated with a potential Eastern Bypass; and a slight widening of the pedestrian access, also requested. There is a flood risk

assessment and SUDS (sustainable urban drainage scheme) , heritage assessment, landscape and visual impact assessment, validation of employment numbers and response to highways comments. The landscape assessment had a 3D visual of what the warehouse would look like with the proposed tree planting and landscaping.

Members of the public who had left their contact details at the meeting on 4th February at Bowerhill Village Hall had been contacted to let them know about the additional information. It was stressed that the parish council would only be considering the new additional information at the meeting on 7th April.

e) [PL/2024/11665](#): **Land at Semington Road, Melksham, SN12 6DP**: (Rear of Townsend Farm Phase 2) Application for reserved matters pursuant to application ref: PL/2022/08155 for appearance, scale, layout and landscaping. Applicant: Living Space Housing.

This was held in closed session at the end of the meeting.

473/24

To note CAWS (Community Action: Whitley & Shaw) response to stage 2 of the Statutory Consultation and to consider the parish council's response. Deadline for comments is Wednesday 19th March. <https://www.limedownsolar.co.uk/>

Councillor Peter Richardson gave an update on the work undertaken recently by CAWS since the deselection of the BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) at Whitley, which is to concentrate on mitigating the impact to residents north of the parish from the cable run connecting to the National Grid substation at Beanacre. The local community focus has not been related to the solar farms north of the M4 as not potentially impacting the parish and local residents. CAWS had written a comprehensive 50-page response to the public consultation concentrating on three main areas to ensure its properly engineered, safe and doesn't disturb residents.

One of the main constraints of the consultation is that at this stage, it's still unknown as to what route the cables will take, just the main areas of investigation are mapped, with the community's preference to the east, so a lot less disruption to residents of Shaw, Whitley and Beanacre. CAWS are suggesting that they consider laying the cables along the A350 when the dualling takes place along the A350.

Feedback on the way the consultation was undertaken was undertaken was also in the CAWS response; with some 14,000 pages in the documentation which was 8 boxes of A4 binders stored in the library's back room as too big to display in a public space.

It was noted that Wiltshire Council's Cabinet objected to the whole scheme when they met last week and considered their consultation response.

Resolved: The parish council submit the following comments.

Melksham Without Parish Council resolved to fully and wholeheartedly support the submission by CAWS to your second stage of statutory consultation regarding the Lime Down Solar Park project.

CAWS (Community Action: Whitley and Shaw) have outlined their role representing residents and businesses and have kept the parish council fully informed and updated of the engagement work they have undertaken and the concerns that have been raised.

The parish council agree and support the request for further public consultation once the cable routes have been established.

They also support the concerns about the potential impact on the local communities in the parish – Beanacre, Whitley and Shaw particularly during the construction and eventual operation. There is already a lot of construction work being undertaken to upgrade the substation on Westlands Lane, the BESS sites adjacent to the substation and the commencement on site of Wick solar farm, and it making a severe impact to residents of Westlands Lane and Whitley from noise vibration, displaced wildlife (deer running across the road), mud and gravel on the road, rubbish accumulating, degradation of the road surface and lorries continuously ignoring the construction management plans and using the route to sites via the busy A350 and weight limit bridge; this has involved Planning Enforcement, Public Protection, Environmental Health and Highway Officer interventions by Wiltshire Council staff.

There is a current planning application for a new shunt reactor at the substation by National Grid and works planned to refurbish the overhead pylons by Balfour Beatty. In addition, a planning application for land at Middle Farm for some 22 dwellings, on the corner of Corsham Road and Westlands Lane.

To this end, the requests for continued engagement with the local community who have a good understanding of the local picture and projects ongoing and in the pipeline is essential to lessen the impact of these developments on the people who live close by; this to be done through CAWS and the parish council please.

The impact of this proposed scheme on the local community, as well as the hydrology, ecology and heritage aspects, is reflected in the requests for community benefits too; and the parish council support the issues raised under these topic headings, and the community benefit requests.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with CAWS and your project team, and in due course with the Planning Inspectorate.

The CAWS submission is attached to the parish council response, so it's together for completeness, but note that they will be making their own separate submission.

Planning Enforcement: To note any new planning enforcement queries raised and updates on previous enforcement queries.

- a) **Westlands Lane, Beanare:** To note action taken on the following issues raised by residents, including noise vibration, displaced wildlife, mud and gravel on the road, rubbish accumulating, degradation of road surface and lorries ignoring construction management plans and using the route to sites via the A350 and weight limit bridge.

The Clerk reported that there were still ongoing deliveries to the two BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) schemes adjacent to the substation, the start on site of Wick Solar Farm in adjacent fields and the start of the works to upgrade the substation by Morrisons Energy for National Grid. This had been raised by the Clerk and Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford with both Public Protection for noise and vibration, and Highways officers for the disruption on the roads. This had been escalated quickly to senior offices and cabinet members at Wiltshire Council and on Thursday afternoon Highways officers were assuring that all was in place. On Friday morning at 8.20am there were a series of lorries accessing Westlands Lane from the A350 resulting in cars turning round on the lane as the road was blocked, and cement mixers reversing out on the busy A350 and causing delays to the A350 traffic. Instructions to the sites to put up signage for "No access to construction traffic" have been forcibly requested. The solar farm are insisting that it's not their site traffic, there is believed to be one rogue lorry accessing Westlands Farm which will be taken up separately by the Clerk with the farmer and most construction traffic ignoring the agreed route seems to be going directly to the substation; although National Grid are saying its for a different project at the substation.

Some Westlands Lane residents have started asking for permanent residents only access to the Lane from the A350, some asking for a pinch point at the bridge that would physically prevent lorries going that way, but allow for emergency vehicles. Some would like it raised at the next parish council's Highways meeting, with another resident feeling it should wait until a community group is organised, to make the request.

The Clerk has made Network Rail aware regarding the weight limit bridge, which is their asset over the railway line, as per the request of a previous Planning Committee meeting. It was noted that locally a vehicle had hit the bridge at Dunch Lane which lead to fallen masonry on the track that was hit by a train. There were concerns of a similar nature at Westlands Lane with vehicles meeting large HGVs at the bridge and having to manoeuvre around them.

Resolved: The parish council raise with Wiltshire Council that if the issues continue, they wish to understand what extra measures they will take and be aware that the parish council will escalate with the police if it continues.

b) **Berryfield Lane, Berryfield:**

This was held in closed session at the end of the meeting.

475/24 Planning Policy:

a) **Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan:**

i) **To approve the response as a Qualifying Body following queries raised by the Examiner.**

It was noted that the proposed response had been approved by the Town Council as one of the two Qualifying Bodies on Tuesday 4th March

Resolved: To approve the response as one of the Qualifying Bodies and send to the Examiner in response to his Clarification Note via Wiltshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning team.

ii) **To note cessation of funding by Melksham Town Council for this joint project and consider way forward for outstanding payments and commissioned work.**

This was held in closed session at the end of the meeting as related to contractual arrangements.

The Chair of Council reported that he was attending a meeting on Monday 31st March with the Clerk and Chair of NHP Steering Group to explain the current situation. All the expenditure had been approved by the Steering Group and advised to the town council months in advance. The Clerk to produce a timeline of previous decision making to present to the town council, to explain the situation as it's believed there is a misunderstanding. The town council still owe the parish council for their share of work undertaken during 2024/25, an invoice for c£10k.

In the meantime, the Clerk sought agreement that the outstanding invoices from Place are paid by the parish council, and the reimbursement sought from the town council for their 70% share.

Resolved: The parish council pay the outstanding Place invoice 029 for £570 plus VAT for the response to the Regulation 16 comments, and the subsequent invoice for the work undertaken in the last weeks for responding to the Examiner's Clarification Note and any subsequent changes to the Plan as a result of the Examiner's conclusion; this is expected to be another day's work at £570, plus VAT. This is on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and the town council's 70% share to be sought moving forward.

iii) **To note draft Minutes of last Steering Group meeting on Wednesday 29th January 2025.**

Resolved: The draft Minutes, and confidential notes to accompany, of the Steering Group meeting on 29th January 2025 were noted.

b) Neighbouring Neighbourhood Plans:

Members noted that following the positive Referendum result on 27th February that Wiltshire Council have decided to formally “make” the Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Members were encouraged as Semington had the same plan consultants and examiner as the Melksham plan currently under review. The Semington Plan included a similar “green wedge” type policy to mirror the one in the emerging Melksham Plan to prevent coalescence between Berryfield/Bowerhill and Semington.

c) Wiltshire Council’s Draft Local Plan Examination:

The members noted the Inspectors’ initial questions and concerns raised with the Local Plan. It was noted that there is a dedicated website page for further updates <https://www.localplanservices.co.uk/wiltshirelpexamination>

d) To consider submitting comments to Wiltshire Council’s survey on what should be included in their Local Validation Checklist (Comments by 21st April).

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-validation-checklist-consultation>

Recommendation: The parish council submit the following comments to the survey.

- Design and Access statements to be included for developments less than 100 dwellings, to be proportionate to the size of the development
- Transport Assessments to be included for developments over 20 dwellings and for infrastructure projects (quoting example of Westlands Lane issues discussed earlier)
- Noise Assessments should be included for a wider distance than 10 metres (quoting example of Corsham Road residents over 100 metres from the BESS installation at substation being disturbed by both construction and eventual installation necessitating in location change of equipment).
- With the coming changes in the NPPF and new Planning and Infrastructure Bill that would give more decision making to Officers, and less to Committee meetings of elected members where members of the public and parish councils could raise issues, its even more important that the documentation accompanying applications is as thorough as possible

e) Members noted the update from the Clerk who attended the Wiltshire Council Planning Forum for town and parish councils on Weds 5th March, and raised questions on engagement with parish councils on s106 agreements and decisions to defend appeals.

f) To note launch of Government’s new Planning & Infrastructure Bill and consider implications at parish level.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill/guide-to-the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill#what-does-the-bill-do>

Concerns were raised at the plans to streamline decision making and have less Local Authority committee decisions.

476/24 S106 Agreements and Developer meetings: (Standing Item)

a) Updates on ongoing and new S106 Agreements

i) Land at Blackmore Farm, Sandridge Common, Melksham, SN12 7QS

[PL/2023/11188](#): Demolition of agricultural buildings and development of up to 500 dwellings, up to 5,000 square metres of employment, land for a primary school, land for mixed use hub, open space. Applicant: Tor & Co for Gleasons

This was held in closed session at the end of the meeting.

Recommendation: The parish council continue the ongoing negotiations in the ways outlined and do not request a toilet for the allotment site.

ii) Pathfinder Place: It was raised that there were still a lot of dead trees on the development that were not mentioned earlier in the update on the outstanding works by Taylor Wimpey; or an update on the flood prevention work previously mentioned. The Clerk agreed to follow up with Councillor Holder and Taylor Wimpey.

iii) Buckley Gardens, Semington Road (PL/2022/02749: 144 dwellings)

There was no update.

iv) Land South of Western Way for 210 dwellings and 70 bed care home

(PL/2022/08504) To note any updates and consider a way forward.

There was no update.

v) To note any S106 decisions made under delegated powers

There were none to report.

b) Contact with developers:

There were none to report.

Two members of the public left the meeting at 8.36pm so that the meeting could go into closed session.

Meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Chairman, 24th March 2025