

**MINUTES of the Planning Committee of Melksham Without Parish Council
held on Monday 13th July 2026 at Melksham Without Parish Council Offices
(First Floor), Melksham Community Campus, Market Place, SN12 6ES at
7:00pm**

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

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Fiona Dey (Parish Officer)

In attendance: Wiltshire Councillor Holder, Councillor Hemmings (as an observer) and 1 member of the public (part)

On Zoom: Councillor Griffiths (as an observer) and 1 member of the public (part)

110/26 Welcome, Housekeeping and Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

As there were no new members of the public or businesses present, the usual housekeeping announcements were not repeated. Everyone present was aware that the meeting was being recorded and that the recording would be published on YouTube following the meeting and deleted once the minutes were approved.

111/26 Apologies

No apologies were received from committee members, as all members of the committee were present.

The Clerk advised that apologies had also been received from Wiltshire Councillors Alford and Griffin.

112/26 Declarations of Interest

a. Declarations of Interest

None.

b. Dispensation Requests

None received.

113/26 Consideration of Items in Closed Session

Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media should be excluded from the meeting as required, as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Resolved: To consider agenda Item 17a (Planning Enforcement – Berryfield Lane) in closed session due to the confidential nature of enforcement matters.

114/26 Public Participation

Standing Orders were suspended for public participation.

MP1 – PL/2026/01555 – Land at Blackmore Farm, Sandridge Common
(Reserved Matters Application)

The Committee received representations from a resident of Sandridge Common (MP1), whose property directly adjoins the Blackmore Farm development site.

The resident emphasised that they did not object to the principle of development, recognising that outline planning permission had already been granted. Their concerns related to the detailed design of the Reserved Matters application and its impact on existing residents.

It was considered that the revised plans published in July had not addressed the concerns previously raised by residents or the Parish Council, particularly the request to move the development further south to provide greater separation from existing properties. Concern was expressed that the proposed row of two-storey dwellings would result in overlooking, loss of privacy and a significant reduction in residential amenity for properties along Sandridge Common.

The resident also questioned whether the proposed landscaping would provide an effective buffer, describing it as insufficient to create a sympathetic transition between the existing community and the new development. It was argued that the layout maximised housing numbers along one of the site's most sensitive boundaries rather than responding to the spacious character of Sandridge Common. A wider structural landscape buffer, greater stand-off distances, lower-density or single-storey dwellings, and additional tree planting were suggested as ways to improve the relationship between the existing and proposed development.

The resident also reiterated concerns regarding the cumulative impact of development in eastern Melksham, noting that Blackmore Farm should not be viewed in isolation given the number of other major developments proposed or under construction in the area. Concern was expressed regarding the cumulative effect on the local highway network and wider infrastructure.

The resident concluded by requesting that Wiltshire Council and the developer reconsider the design of the Sandridge Common boundary, including realigning dwellings to be side-on rather than back-to-back with existing dwellings, to provide a more sympathetic relationship with neighbouring properties through increased separation, enhanced landscaping and lower-density development.

Members thanked the resident for attending and for the detailed and constructive representations. They advised that the matters raised would be considered during the Committee's later discussion of the application.

Wiltshire Councillor Holder – National Scheme of Delegation for Planning Functions

Wiltshire Councillor Holder drew Members' attention to a briefing issued that day regarding the Government's new National Scheme of Delegation for Planning Functions, due to come into effect on 31 October 2026. He read through the briefing and highlighted key points. He explained that the changes would significantly increase the number of planning applications determined by planning officers rather than planning committees.

He advised that many applications, including householder developments, smaller developments and some Reserved Matters applications, would be required to be determined under delegated powers. Larger or more significant applications could still be referred to Planning Committee, but only if they met a new national "Gateway Test". Existing local arrangements allowing Wiltshire Councillors to call applications to committee, or automatic committee referral after a certain number of objections, would no longer apply.

Councillor Holder explained that transitional arrangements would apply before the new system came into force and encouraged the Parish Council to raise any significant planning concerns promptly while the current call-in arrangements remained available.

Members expressed concern about the potential impact on local democratic accountability and questioned whether important local issues would continue to receive public consideration by the Planning Committee. The Clerk also queried how town and parish councils would be consulted on Section 106 Agreements where applications were determined under delegated powers, noting recent experience where draft agreements had not been available until shortly before decisions were made with no notification of their publication.

Festival Organiser - Wiltshire Throwback Festival 2026

Agenda Item 13 was brought forward to allow the festival organiser, attending remotely, to participate in the discussion.

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received no complaints regarding the 2026 Wiltshire Throwback Festival. Comments seen on social media had also been largely positive, with some residents commenting humorously that the event had not been loud enough for them to listen from their gardens without attending.

Members similarly reported that they had not received complaints regarding the conduct of the festival.

Discussion took place regarding the apparent inconsistency between the requirement for the Wiltshire Throwback Festival to obtain planning permission and the arrangements applying to other temporary events.

The Clerk advised that enquiries had been made regarding WOMAD, a substantially larger event with an attendance understood to be around 40,000. The relevant parish council had confirmed that WOMAD was required to comply with licensing and noise-management requirements but had not been required to submit a planning application.

Members also noted that they were unaware of planning applications being required for other temporary events being held in King George V park in Melksham including the Melksham ice rink and Sham Jam. It was questioned why the Wiltshire Throwback Festival had been treated differently.

The organiser explained that the Wiltshire Throwback Festival had not exceeded the permitted period for temporary structures and that the principal reason given for requiring planning permission related to ecological constraints associated with the site.

Although similar licensing and event-management requirements applied to other festivals, the ecology of the Oakfields location had created an additional planning requirement. The organiser advised that the planning process, associated uncertainty and cost had placed a considerable burden on the event.

Members questioned why comparable ecological considerations did not appear to apply to WOMAD, which was also held on agricultural land. The organiser was unable to explain the distinction but agreed that the apparent difference warranted further enquiry.

The organiser advised that the suitability of the Oakfields site would need to be reviewed for any future event. In addition to the planning difficulties, problems

had arisen with one of the landowners. Taken together, these matters meant that a different location might need to be considered.

Members expressed disappointment that the regulatory process and associated costs could jeopardise the continuation of an event which had generated positive feedback and no complaints to the Parish Council.

Resolved: To write to Wiltshire Council seeking clarification on:

- why planning permission had been required for the Wiltshire Throwback Festival;
- the specific ecological circumstances which triggered that requirement;
- why comparable temporary festivals and events, including WOMAD, did not appear to require planning permission; and
- how Wiltshire Council ensured that planning requirements were applied consistently to temporary outdoor events.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

115/26 New Planning Applications

a. **PL/2026/03638 – 2a Valldata House, Valldata, Halifax Road, Bowerhill.** Full Planning Permission – Erection of a first-floor extension to the north of the site and a three-storey side extension on the western elevation, with new access arrangements and associated works.

Comments: SUPPORT

Members welcomed the proposed expansion of an existing business within Bowerhill Industrial Estate and the additional employment opportunities it would provide. The proposal supports the aims of Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 10 (Employment Sites), which seeks to support the retention and growth of employment uses in appropriate locations.

The Committee requested clarification that, despite the reduction in parking spaces, sufficient on-site parking would remain to meet the operational needs of the enlarged premises and avoid overspill parking on surrounding roads.

Members encouraged the applicant to maximise opportunities for renewable energy generation by incorporating solar photovoltaic panels on the proposed flat roof.

The Committee reiterated its previous request for improved pedestrian connectivity between the site and the nearby bus stop on Halifax Road. Whilst noting Wiltshire Council's previous view that a planning obligation for a footway extension would not meet the statutory tests, Members remained concerned that employees travelling by bus would still be required to walk across a grass verge rather than a continuous footway. The Committee therefore encouraged Wiltshire Council and the applicant to continue exploring opportunities to improve pedestrian access to the site.

Members requested that a Bird Management Strategy be required to demonstrate how the building will be designed and managed to discourage seagull roosting, in order to minimise the risk of bird strikes affecting the operational flight path of the Wiltshire Air Ambulance (as included in Condition 19 of the Decision Notice for PL/2024/11426 – Gompels Warehouse and in

Condition 7 of the Decision Notice for PL/2023/01008 Temporary Milestone Depot).

b. PL/2026/03593 – B3 Ashville Centre, Commerce Way, Melksham Full Planning Permission – Proposed Fenestration Changes

Members noted that the application related solely to alterations to the building's windows and external openings and would not materially alter the scale or use of the building.

Comments: NO OBJECTION

Members noted an apparent drafting error within the application documentation, which stated that "there will be detrimental impact to the surrounding area or buildings as a result of the alterations". The Committee considered that the word "not" had inadvertently been omitted, as the nature of the proposed fenestration changes would not be expected to result in any detrimental impact. Members therefore requested clarification of the wording but agreed that this did not alter their consideration of the application.

c. PL/2026/03850 – Public Open Space, Falcon Way, Bowerhill Tree Preservation Order Consent – Crown lifting of Ash, Lime and Field Maple trees

Comments: NO OBJECTION

Members considered the arboricultural works proposed. While they had no objection to the work, they would like clarification on why the work is required and who the application has been made on behalf of -is this Wiltshire Council?

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d. PL/2026/03753 – Garden House, Sandridge Park, Sandridge Common Householder Planning Permission – Erection of a single-storey extension

Comments: NO OBJECTION

e. PL/2026/03551 – Former Melksham Library Site, Lowbourne, Melksham Wiltshire Council Regulation 3 Application – 55 Extra Care Apartments with ancillary care facilities, landscaping, access, parking and associated works

Comments: SUPPORT

Members noted that, although the site lies outside Melksham Without Parish, it is allocated for development under Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 7.2 (Former Melksham Library Site).

The Committee welcomed the redevelopment of this brownfield site and the provision of extra care accommodation, recognising that the principle of development is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan. However, Members emphasised that the proposal should satisfy all of the requirements of Policy 7.2, including those relating to design quality, accessibility and mitigation measures associated with the loss of public parking.

Members considered that a robust Construction Management Plan would be essential to minimise disruption to neighbouring residents and businesses during the construction period. They requested that this be secured by planning condition and that Wiltshire Council actively monitor and enforce compliance throughout the construction phase.

The Committee also considered that the submitted noise assessment should specifically assess the potential cumulative impact of noise and vibration from the individual air source heat pumps, to ensure that the amenity of residents and neighbouring residents would not be adversely affected.

Members expressed disappointment that solar storage batteries are not included within the scheme and requested that this option be revisited.

Members noted concerns raised by residents of Union Street regarding the loss of Lowbourne Car Park and the limited capacity of Union Street car park. Whilst acknowledging that parking mitigation forms part of Policy 7.2, the Committee requested that Wiltshire Council ensure that residents displaced to alternative public car parks do not incur additional costs through higher parking permit charges as a consequence of the redevelopment.

Notes from pre-application meetings with the developer would also be submitted. Members requested that the issues raised and requests made during those meetings be addressed.

116/26 Amended Plans / Additional Information

- a. **PL/2026/01555 – Land at Blackmore Farm, Sandridge Common.**
Reserved Matters Application (Appearance, Layout, Scale and Landscaping) for 229 dwellings and associated infrastructure

The Committee considered the amended plans submitted since the previous meeting. Members noted that a significant number of documents had been revised, including amendments following comments from the Urban Design Officer, although the principal concerns previously identified by the Parish Council appeared to remain unresolved.

Members referred to the representations made during Public Participation regarding the relationship between the proposed development and existing properties on Sandridge Common. It was noted that, despite the revised plans, the proposed dwellings backing onto existing homes remained largely unchanged and concerns regarding overlooking, privacy and the adequacy of the landscape buffer had not been satisfactorily addressed.

Comments: OBJECT

Whilst recognising that the principle of development has already been established through the outline planning permission, the Parish Council maintains its objection to the Reserved Matters application and amended plans, as it considers that the submitted design fails to deliver the high-quality place-making expected by the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (JMNP2) and does not adequately respond to the comments of the Urban Design Officer or the concerns previously raised by the Parish Council and local residents.

The Committee considers that the proposal represents an unimaginative urban design that relies on a conventional housing estate layout rather than creating a

distinctive new neighbourhood reflecting the principles set out within the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Design Code.

In particular, the Committee considers that:

- the development remains car-led rather than landscape-led, with the highway layout dominating the design rather than the landscape and green infrastructure;
- the proposed green infrastructure does not structure the development or provide a strong landscape framework around which the neighbourhood is organised;
- the proposed open spaces do not appear sufficiently high quality or multifunctional, nor do they create attractive spaces that encourage recreation, biodiversity and community use;
- the layout does little to establish a strong sense of place or community identity, instead following a standard suburban estate layout; and
- the scheme demonstrates limited recognition of the principles contained within the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Design Code and the Wiltshire Design Guide, particularly those relating to greener streets, connected landscapes, healthy neighbourhoods and locally distinctive design.

The Parish Council remains particularly concerned about the relationship between the proposed development and the existing properties on Sandridge Common. The revised plans do not adequately address the concerns previously raised by residents or the Parish Council regarding overlooking, loss of privacy and the significant reduction in residential amenity experienced by existing householders.

The proposed landscape buffer remains too narrow to provide an effective transition between the existing community and the new development. The Parish Council requests that the layout be redesigned to provide a more generous structural landscape buffer, incorporating greater stand-off distances, enhanced planting and, where appropriate, lower-density or single-storey development adjacent to existing homes in order to achieve a more sympathetic transition.

The Committee also questions whether, now that the allocation is progressing in two separate phases, the proposed location of the primary school remains the most appropriate. Consideration should be given to relocating the school towards the northern part of the site, enabling it to serve the first phase of development at an earlier stage, improve accessibility for the initial residents and strengthen the creation of an early community focus.

Finally, the Parish Council would welcome the opportunity to review the proposed Active Travel Plan, including the pedestrian and cycle connections throughout the site and their integration with the wider active travel network. Given the strategic importance of the development, it is important that walking, wheeling and cycling are prioritised from the outset and that the development demonstrates how it will encourage sustainable travel choices.

The Parish Council therefore requests that Wiltshire Council seek significant amendments to the Reserved Matters application before determining the proposal, to ensure that it delivers the quality of design, landscaping and place-making expected for one of Melksham's principal strategic growth sites and

complies with the requirements of the adopted Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan.

b. PL/2025/07391 – Land South of Western Way, Melksham

Reserved Matters (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale) for 210 dwellings

The Committee noted amended plans had been submitted since its previous consideration of the application.

The Clerk reported the response received from Wiltshire Council regarding the Parish Council's previous request to investigate whether the approved access arrangements could be amended. Wiltshire Council had advised that, as the access formed part of the outline planning permission, a Section 73 application would not be sufficient to alter the access arrangements, and a fresh planning application would instead be required. Officers had also indicated that neither Wiltshire Council Highways nor the applicant were likely to support such a change. Members expressed disappointment with this response but noted the position.

Comments:

Members supported the comments submitted by the Pathfinder Place Residents' Association regarding the discharge of the Noise Protection Scheme condition (PL/2026/01660). Particular concern was raised that the revised plans appeared to show acoustic fencing protecting only part of the development adjoining Bowerhill Industrial Estate, with other dwellings located adjacent to current and proposed employment uses (Wiltshire Council Central Depot) receiving no equivalent mitigation. Members would like to see additional acoustic fencing included so that the development complies with Point 4 of Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 Policy 7.3, which requires the site layout, built form and scale to minimise visual impacts and safeguard the amenity of existing and new neighbouring residents.

Members also supported the comments submitted by the Pathfinder Place Residents' Association regarding visitor parking.

c. PL/2025/00626 – Land North of Berryfield Lane, Melksham. Outline application for up to 68 dwellings

Comments: In response to the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy – Addendum 5, which includes responses to the Parish Council's comments, the Parish Council wants to raise two further points:

Section 2.1.3 states "...Developers aren't required to reduce the flooding that currently exists, therefore improving the existing flooding on Semington Road/Berryfield Park, and Berryfield Lane is not in the purview of the development"

Members believe that this is contrary to Policy 3 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 which states "Development proposals in locations with known flooding issues should include appropriate mitigation and construction methods, and, where appropriate contributions towards wider catchment projects."

Section 2.1.6 states “The remainder of the route, crossing the green area south of Berry Brook Park and the riparian land, is stated in Land Registry to be owned by Wiltshire Council not Parish Council”

The Parish Council highlights that the land was transferred from Wiltshire Council to Melksham Without Parish Council and registered with the Land Registry in October 2024. Therefore, as the current landowner, the proposed route of the sewer should be discussed with the Parish Council. Note: the land is registered as Land at Berryfield Park (WT276080); we do not recognise the description “Berry Brook Park”.

The Committee considered the amended parameter plans, including the newly submitted Building Heights Parameter Plan.

Resolved 1: To ratify the additional comments from the parish council submitted by the Clerk associated with the proposed Building Heights Parameter Plan. The comments raised concern that the parameter plan could permit buildings of a scale that would adversely affect the character of Berryfield and the amenity of neighbouring residents, especially as the land is being built up by 1m.

Discussion took place regarding the representations submitted by the Parish Council throughout the course of the application. The Clerk suggested that, given the number of consultation responses now submitted, it would be beneficial to prepare a single consolidated summary of the Parish Council's position.

Resolved 2: Officers review all comments previously submitted by the Parish Council, together with responses from statutory consultees, to produce a comprehensive summary identifying the key planning issues and any matters that had not yet been adequately addressed.

The Committee agreed that the summary would provide a useful briefing document for the Parish Council's representatives when presenting at the forthcoming Western Area Planning Committee and would also be used as the basis for responding to the public consultation for the proposed adjoining development.

Resolved 3: The Clerk to ask the Planning Officer when the S106/Heads of Terms would be published.

Resolved 4: Parish Council representatives at the Western Area Planning Committee on 19th August 2026

- Councillor Wood on behalf of Melksham Without Parish Council
- Councillor Pafford as spokesperson for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan
- Councillor Haffenden (subject to availability).

d. PL/2025/06105 – Land at Bowerhill Lane (Old Loves Farm)

The Clerk advised that no substantive response had yet been received from Wiltshire Council regarding the Parish Council's previous comments on the proposed access arrangements.

Members agreed that no additional comments could be made until further information became available. The Clerk advised that she had an upcoming

meeting with the Planning Officer to discuss the matter, accompanied by Wiltshire Councillor Holder and Councillor Glover (subject to availability).

e. PL/2025/05552 – Land South of Brockleaze, Neston, Corsham. Battery Energy Storage System

Members considered the Ninth and Tenth Addendum prepared by Community Action Whitley and Shaw (CAWS) in support of the continuing objection to the proposal.

The Committee noted that the additional documents responded to further technical information submitted by the applicant and expanded upon concerns regarding fire safety, emergency planning, landscape impact, cumulative effects and the suitability of the proposed location.

Members thanked CAWS for the considerable amount of work undertaken in preparing the detailed technical submissions and agreed that the additional material strengthened the existing objection.

Comments: Members support and endorse the Ninth and Tenth Addenda to the Community Action Whitley and Shaw (CAWS) objection document.

117/26 Current Planning Applications

a. PL/2024/10345 (FULL) and PL/2025/09780 (OUT) – Land north of the A3102, Melksham (New Road Farm)

Members noted that no new documents or consultee responses had been received since the previous meeting.

b. PL/2026/02966 – Blackmore Farm (East of Blackmore), Sandridge Common Outline Planning Application for up to 275 dwellings

The Committee noted the recently published comments from the Conservation Officer and Active Travel England.

Members agreed that, as with the Reserved Matters application for Blackmore Farm, any future response should be assessed against the policies and Design Code contained within the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan. It was considered important that the two adjoining developments created a cohesive extension to Melksham rather than two unrelated housing estates.

No further comments were made at this stage.

c. PL/2025/06749 – Land North of Bath Road (A365), Melksham (Adjacent to Melksham Oak Community School)

The Committee noted that no new plans or consultee responses had been received.

d. PL/2024/09725 – Land off Corsham Road, Whitley (Middle Farm)

The Clerk advised that no further correspondence had yet been received from Wiltshire Council regarding the Parish Council's previous representations.

e. **PL/2026/01787 – Cricket Ground, Land North West of St Barnabas Church** Erection of Wooden Changing Pavilion

Members noted that no further updates had been received since the previous meeting.

Members noted that Wiltshire Councillor Alford was continuing to chase progress with the planning officer.

118/26 Wiltshire Councillor Call-Ins

Members reviewed the current position regarding Wiltshire Councillor call-ins for the Committee's major planning applications in light of the forthcoming National Scheme of Delegation. Members confirmed which applications had already been called in and identified those where further action was required to ensure committee consideration. Particular emphasis was placed on securing committee scrutiny of applications where detailed design, Section 106 obligations or compliance with the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 and original draft Local Plan site allocation policies remained important considerations.

- **PL/2026/03551 – Former Library Site, Lowbourn** (not in the parish):
 - **Already called-in** by Wiltshire Councillor Jennie Westbrook.
 - **Resolved 1:** Members support the call-in but request that the reasons should be strengthened to ensure the application fully complies with the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 site allocation policy 7.2, including the detail of the scheme and any Section 106 obligations.
- **PL/2025/07391 – Land South of Western Way (Reserved Matters):**
 - **Resolved 2:** To confirm a call-in is in place.
 - If not already called-in, Members wished it to be called-in to allow consideration of the detailed design, policy compliance and planning obligations as a site allocation in the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 Policy 7.3.
 - **Post Meeting Note:**
Already Called-in by Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder.
- **PL/2025/00626 – Land North of Berryfield Lane:**
 - No further action required. The application was already scheduled to be determined by the Western Area Planning Committee on 19th August 2026.
- **PL/2025/06105 - Land at Bowerhill Lane (Old Loves Farm):**
 - **Already called-in** by Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder
- **PL/2025/05552 - Land South of Brockleaze** (not in the parish):
 - **Resolved 3:** To confirm a call-in is in place
 - **Post Meeting Note:**
Already Called-in by Wiltshire Councillor Peter Wragg.
- **PL/2024/10345 (FULL) and PL/2025/09780 (OUT) – Land north of the A3102 (New Road Farm):**
 - **Resolved 4:** To check that both applications had been called in.
 - Members noted that an earlier call-in may only have related to the first application and requested that both the Full and Outline applications be covered, given the withdrawal of the Local Plan and the need to secure

compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan and planning obligations as per the original draft Local Plan site allocation policy 20.

- **Post Meeting Note:**
PL/2024/10345 (FULL) Already Called-in by Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder.
PL/2025/09780 (OUT) Request call-in
- **PL/2026/01555 – Blackmore Farm Reserved Matters:**
 - **Already called-in** by Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder

This was to ensure that the application meets the requirements of the original draft Local Plan site allocation Policy 18 and to address design issues.
- **PL/2026/02966 – Land East of Blackmore Farm (Outline):**
 - **Resolved 5: To request the application is called-in.** Members agreed that, as the Parish Council objected to the proposal, it should also be referred to Planning Committee as speculative development.
- **PL/2025/06749 – Land North of Bath Road (A365 – adjacent to Melksham Oak Community School):**
 - **Already called-in** by Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder
 - Although Members were not necessarily objecting to the principle of development, they wished the application to be considered by Committee to ensure that the Section 106 Agreement and the requirements of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 were properly secured as well as the planning obligations as per the original draft Local Plan site allocation policy 19.
- **PL/2024/09725 Land off Corsham Road, Whitley (Middle Farm):**
 - **Already called-in** by Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford

This was to ensure that the application meets the policy requirements of the site allocation in Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 Policy 7.5.
- **PL/2026/01787 – Beanacre Cricket Pavilion:**
 - **Resolved 6:** To request the application is called-in if the Planning Officer is minded to refuse it.
 - Members were keen to avoid unnecessary delay to the project.

119/26 Public Consultations

a. Bellway Homes – Proposal at Semington Road

Resolved 1: To approve the notes of the pre-application meeting held with Bellway Homes and Savills on 24 June 2026 (appendix 1) and to submit them as the parish council's comments to the public consultation.

Resolved 2: Following production of a comprehensive summary of parish council and statutory consultee comments for application PL/2025/00626 – Land North of Berryfield Lane identifying the key planning issues (Min 116/26 c resolution 2), to submit the summary to the consultation for this adjacent site.

b. Great Whaddon (between Hilpertton and Semington) and Pewsham, Chippenham

Resolved 1: To submit the following comments to the Great Whaddon and Pewsham public consultations:

The Parish Council is concerned about the cumulative impact of strategic housing developments within and around Melksham on the strategic highway network, particularly the A350 corridor. Whilst this proposal lies outside the parish, it will contribute to additional traffic movements through the Melksham area and should not be considered in isolation from the significant housing growth already proposed or approved around the town. The cumulative effect of these developments adds further weight to the longstanding requirement for a Melksham bypass and reinforces the importance of safeguarding a suitable route to enable its future delivery. The Parish Council therefore requests that the cumulative transport impacts are fully assessed and that the need for strategic highway infrastructure, including the future Melksham bypass, is given appropriate consideration.

Resolved 2: To submit similar comments to the Blackmore Farm planning applications (PL/2026/01555 and PL/2026/02966):

120/26 Tree Preservation Order

Resolved 1: To support Tree Preservation Order TPO/2026/00015 for Snarlton Farm, Eastern Way, Melksham.

Resolved 2: To request a Tree Preservation Order for the copse of trees at the end of Berryfield Lane adjacent to the A350 for its local environmental and ecological importance as it supports a rookery.

121/26 Proposed Energy Installations

a. Lime Down Solar

The Committee received an update on the Lime Down Solar project.

It was reported that a large number of documents continued to be published by the Examining Authority and the developer, making it challenging to keep abreast of all changes. Members understood that the recent amendments principally related to changes north of the M4. It was not considered that the latest updates had any direct implications for Melksham Without Parish.

Members considered that Wiltshire Council was better placed to monitor the evolving proposals in detail and noted that a dedicated project officer had been appointed to oversee the scheme.

Resolved: The Clerk to ask the project officer to keep the parish council informed of any developments that would affect the parish particularly the cable connections to the sub station at Beanacre and the cumulative effect in Shaw and Whitley.

b. Cable Route for Norrington Spring Park Project (Aureos for SSEN Distribution) and Studley Solar Farm (DNOC for Verdant Energy)

Resolved 1: To approve the notes of the meeting held with Aureos on 1st July 2026 (appendix 2)

The Clerk updated Members on discussions with Wiltshire Council's Principal Drainage Engineer regarding the opportunity to improve highway drainage in conjunction with the proposed energy infrastructure works.

Members were advised that the Principal Drainage Engineer was investigating whether any drainage improvements could be undertaken by the Highway

Authority in parallel with Aureos' work on Corsham Road, utilising the same road closure.

The Committee also received an update on discussions relating to the proposed improvements to the Shaw Village Hall car park. Members noted that the developer had been put in contact with representatives of the Village Hall and that discussions were continuing regarding potential assistance with preparatory works as part of the project's community benefit package.

The Clerk advised that she had contacted Wiltshire Council to enquire whether the deterioration of the road surface on Westlands Lane could be considered under the provisions for extraordinary traffic use. The question had been acknowledged, with a substantive reply expected in due course.

122/26 Wiltshire Council Engagement on Cumulative Impact

No response had yet been received from Wiltshire Council.

123/26 Wilts and Berks Canal Trust

Resolved: To approve the notes of the meeting held with Wilts and Berks Canal Trust on 1st July 2026 (appendix 3)

The Committee considered a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) prepared by Councillor Richardson following the recent meeting with representatives of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust.

Members welcomed the draft as a constructive basis for establishing a shared understanding between the Parish Council and the Canal Trust. Discussion took place regarding a proposed amendment from Councillor Harris, who suggested that the document should include a stronger statement of support for the wider restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal.

Whilst Members recognised the intention behind the proposed amendment, it was considered that the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 already contained supporting text expressing the Parish Council's commitment to the wider canal restoration project. Some Members therefore felt that it was unnecessary to duplicate this within the Memorandum of Understanding, which should instead remain focused on setting out the principles for future working between the two organisations.

Members agreed that additional time should be allowed for consideration before adoption and that all Parish Councillors should have the opportunity to comment.

Resolved: To defer the draft Memorandum of Understanding to the September 2026 Full Council meeting for consideration.

124/26 Planning Policy

a. Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (NHP):

- i. Members considered the recent planning applications to identify items to be included in a future review of the Neighbourhood Plan (standing agenda item to reflect on responses to planning applications for future review of the Neighbourhood Plan).

Resolved: To add stronger employment land protection policies, including support for expanding existing employment sites, to the list of items for a future Neighbourhood Plan review.

- ii. Members noted that the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan had been shortlisted for the Best Plan category at the RTPi South-West Awards for Planning Excellence 2026 but did not win. The Clerk, Councillor Pafford (as former Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering committee), and Katie Lea and Vaughan Thompson from Place Studios attended the awards ceremony.

b. Wiltshire Council's Draft Local Plan:

- i. Members noted Wiltshire Council's notice of intention to commence the preparation of a new Wiltshire Local Plan.
- ii. Members noted Wiltshire Council's recently published *Neighbourhood Planning Update* (Briefing Note 26-10), which had been issued shortly before the meeting and had not been circulated in advance. Councillor Richardson highlighted a number of key points from the briefing, including the implications of the withdrawal of the Wiltshire Local Plan, changes to neighbourhood planning legislation and Wiltshire Council's position regarding indicative housing figures for neighbourhood plan areas.

Resolved: To write to Wiltshire Council requesting that it commence work with the Parish Council to establish an appropriate housing requirement for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area. This is detailed in Wiltshire Council's *Briefing Note 26-10*, which advises that where the Local Planning Authority is unable to provide a housing requirement figure, neighbourhood planning bodies may exceptionally need to determine one themselves, working proactively with the Local Planning Authority.

Members considered that, although the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2025, the absence of an agreed housing requirement leaves the Plan without the additional protection envisaged by paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Housing numbers will help ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan can continue to provide an effective basis for resisting speculative and unplanned development.

- iii. The Clerk advised that she was meeting with Wiltshire Council on 14th July to discuss the status of the former West Wiltshire Development Plan Document (DPD), which includes developer play area contribution requirements that differ from the remainder of Wiltshire. She noted that these provisions had been expected to be replaced through the new Local Plan and would be discussing the implications of the Local Plan's withdrawal on their continued application.

- c. **Resolved:** To submit the responses suggested by the Clerk (paper circulated) on the government's consultation on proposals for new and amended development rights.

125/26 Appeals

- a. **52E Chapel Lane, Beanacre (PL/2023/05883: appeal 6001365)**

The Clerk reported that she had contacted Wiltshire Council to enquire about the delay in determining the appeal for 52E Chapel Lane, Beanacre. Members were

advised that the appeal was being progressed under an older appeals process and, as a result, was taking longer to determine. It was explained that appeals submitted under the newer process were subject to prescribed timescales and were therefore being prioritised ahead of older cases. Members noted the update.

b. Whistle Mead Appeal (PL/2023/01914: appeal 6009873)

Councillor Richardson explained that Community Action Whitley and Shaw (CAWS) had prepared an 86-page submission for the Whistle Mead appeal focusing on the cumulative impacts arising from the concentration of major energy infrastructure projects. He advised that the document systematically explained the eleven cumulative impact pathways, set out the supporting evidence for each, and drew these together into an overall assessment. Members noted that the intention was to place the cumulative impact methodology before the Planning Inspector, as little progress had been made in securing its consideration by Wiltshire Council. Councillor Richardson considered that, if accepted by the Inspector, the approach could establish an important planning precedent for future cases. Whilst acknowledging that success was not guaranteed, he considered the opportunity worthwhile.

Resolved: To endorse and support the CAWS submissions relating to the Whistle Mead appeal.

c. 554 Canal Bridge Appeal (PL/2026/02084: appeal 6012410)

The Clerk advised Members that a new appeal, via written representations, had been lodged in relation to the canal bridge application. It was explained that officers would submit the Parish Council's previously approved comments on the planning application as its representation to the Planning Inspectorate.

126/26 Planning Enforcement

Held in closed session at the end of the meeting

a. Berryfield Lane

Members noted that, following further concerns being raised regarding ongoing activity at the site on Berryfield Lane, Wiltshire Council's Planning Enforcement Officer had undertaken a further site inspection. The Enforcement Officer subsequently confirmed that all material associated with the unauthorised use had been removed, the breach of planning control had ceased, and the enforcement investigation had been closed. Members also noted that the scaffolding contractor had vacated the site.

127/26 S106 Agreements and Developer Meetings

a. Pathfinder Place

The Clerk reported that the Section 278 highway works at Pathfinder Place had commenced on 13th July and were expected to continue for approximately four weeks before work returned to the main development site (Section 38 works).

The Clerk reported that Wiltshire Council had made the Cycle Tracks Order 2026 to convert Footpath 40 (MELK40), between the A350 and Burnet Close South, into a shared-use route for pedestrians and cyclists as part of the Pathfinder

Place highway improvements. It had been confirmed that the route would remain available to pedestrians whilst also becoming a cycle track and that construction was currently programmed to commence in September. Members also discussed whether the route would be of sufficient width to safely accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists.

Resolved: To confirm with Wiltshire Council that the new footpath would be wide enough (3 metres) to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

b. Developer Meetings

The Clerk reminded Members of the forthcoming meeting with the developers of the Townsend Farm development and Wiltshire Council's Highway Officer, on Tuesday 14th July 2026, to discuss the proposed access arrangements and the timing of highway works.

The Clerk advised Members that Wiltshire Council had launched a public consultation on proposals for a new Central Depot on the former Christie Miller Sports Centre and Golf Course site at Bowerhill. The proposed development would include a Household Recycling Centre, vehicle maintenance facilities, offices and associated operational buildings, with public consultation running until 31 July 2026 ahead of the submission of a planning application later in the year. Members were meeting with the project team at Wiltshire Council on Tuesday 14th July 2026.

Members noted that, owing to the significance of the proposal and the consultation timescale, the consultation response would be considered by Full Council.

c. Community Engagement and Section 106 Contributions

No update had been received.

Meeting closed at 10.00 pm.

Chairman, 27th July 2026

Appendix 1

NOTES OF MEETING WITH BELLWAY & SAVILLS

ON WEDNESDAY 24th JUNE 2026 AT 2:00PM

RE: Proposal at Semington Road

Present: Councillor Richard Wood (Chair of Planning)
Councillor Alan Baines (Vice Chair of Planning)
Councillor David Pafford (Vice Chair of Council)
Councillor Mark Harris (Planning Committee Member)
Councillor Martin Franks (Planning Committee Member)

Saffi Rabey (Melksham Town Council, Chair of Planning)

Teresa Strange (Clerk, Melksham Without)
Fiona Dey (Parish Officer, Melksham Without)

Robert James, National Projects Director, Bellway Homes
Jon Gately, Planning Director, Savills

Introduction

Bellway explained that they wished to introduce proposals for residential development on land between Semington Road and Berryfield Lane ahead of a public consultation event and the submission of a planning application.

They noted that, following the withdrawal of the Wiltshire Local Plan, market towns such as Melksham were likely to continue to accommodate future housing growth and they considered this site capable of delivering a high-quality extension to the town.

Proposed Development

Bellway outlined proposals for approximately **195 dwellings**, including policy-compliant affordable housing, with vehicular access from Semington Road. The development would include landscaped public open space, two equipped play areas and retention and enhancement of existing public rights of way.

Bellway advised that the masterplan had been designed around several key principles:

- creating a distinctive canalside development;
- safeguarding the future Wilts & Berks Canal corridor;
- maintaining permanent open space between Berryfield and Melksham;
- providing a mix of housing types; and
- integrating nature throughout the development.

Bellway explained that the intention was to create a development that would be noticeably different from a conventional housing estate, taking advantage of the proposed Wilts & Berks Canal corridor to create a distinctive place with a strong landscape setting. They stated that the aim was to "raise the bar" in terms of design quality and create a development that residents would want to visit as well as live in.

Separation between Melksham and Berryfield

Councillors expressed concern that Berryfield had experienced significant housing growth in recent years and felt that the village was overdeveloped. They highlighted the cumulative impact of existing and committed developments on local infrastructure, community facilities and the character of the village, and emphasised the importance of ensuring that any further development was supported by appropriate infrastructure and maintained a clear separation between Berryfield and Melksham.

Bellway acknowledged these concerns and advised that the proposals had been developed with a substantial area of open space (~10 acres) and the safeguarded canal corridor to provide a permanent landscape buffer between Berryfield and Melksham. Members felt that that the open space within the development was not equivalent to the existing open fields.

Canal Project

Members sought clarification regarding the relationship between the housing development and the proposed Wilts & Berks Canal. Bellway explained that the housing proposals had been designed around the safeguarded canal corridor and that the layout had been amended to accommodate it. Prior to the Canal being built, it was planned that the route incorporated permanent water features, as opposed to dry attenuation ponds.

They advised that:

- the canal route would remain safeguarded;
- housing would be set back from the corridor;
- the canal crossing had been repositioned to avoid important trees;
- the development would provide interim landscaping until the canal is delivered;
- drainage proposals would complement the future canal.

Bellway stated that they had worked closely with the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust throughout the preparation of the proposals.

Design Quality

Bellway explained that they wished to deliver a high-quality development with a distinctive character. Reference was made to examples of previous Bellway developments incorporating attractive public open spaces, sustainable drainage features and landscaping. Councillors commented that the quality of materials, public realm and landscaping would be particularly important if the development was to achieve the aspirations outlined in the presentation.

Affordable Housing

Bellway stated that the amount of affordable housing had not been decided but would be in the range 30%-40%.

Discussion took place regarding the range of affordable homes previously delivered at Bowood View, including apartments, bungalows, houses, social rented and shared ownership properties. Bellway advised that affordable homes

would not be concentrated into a single area but would generally be distributed across the site.

Access and Highways

Considerable discussion took place regarding the proposed access arrangements.

Bellway advised that:

- the principal vehicular access would be from Semington Road;
- the junction had been positioned close to the existing bus stops;
- alterations would be made to the existing traffic calming measures;

Discussion also took place regarding emergency access. Bellway indicated that emergency access arrangements could potentially be considered from Berryfield Lane if required through the detailed design process, although no secondary vehicular access was currently proposed.

Members strongly advised that Berryfield Lane and its junction onto the A350 must not be used for construction traffic or residential traffic. Bellway noted the advice and commented that construction access arrangements would form part of the planning application and Construction Management Plan.

Walking and Cycling

Discussion took place regarding walking and cycling connections into Melksham town centre, local schools and surrounding communities. Bellway stated that existing public rights of way would be retained and enhanced, with new pedestrian and cycle links incorporated into the development.

Members highlighted the need for good pedestrian access from the development to the allotments in Berryfield.

The possibility of a contribution towards the cost of legal orders to divert Right of Ways were discussed.

Bellway offered that they could help with assessing the cost of solutions proposed by the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust from the holistic review of Semington Road.

Community Facilities

Councillors asked what community benefits the development might provide.

Bellway explained that Section 106 obligations would be agreed with Wiltshire Council and could include contributions towards:

- education;
- healthcare;
- transport;
- community facilities;
- public open space.

Reference was made to the contributions previously secured through the Bowood View development, including funding for the village hall. A contribution towards expansion of the village hall was discussed.

Public Consultation

Bellway confirmed that a public consultation event would be held in Berryfield Village Hall on 10th July 2026 1pm-5pm and 7.45pm – 9pm. Comments are invited until 24th July 2026. They encouraged councillors and residents to attend and provide feedback before the planning application was finalised.

Bellway stated that comments received during consultation would be reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the final proposals before submission.

Timescale

Bellway outlined the anticipated programme:

- Public consultation – July 2026.
- Planning application submission – Summer 2026.
- Wiltshire Council consultation – Summer/Autumn 2026.
- Planning determination – Winter 2026/27.
- Start on site – approximately 2028.
- First occupations – approximately 2029.
- Completion of the development – approximately 2033.

Members felt that the timescale was optimistic.

Meeting closed at 4:15pm

Appendix 2

NOTES OF MEETING WITH AUREOS ON WEDNESDAY 1st JULY 2026 AT 10:00AM RE: CABLE ROUTE TO NORRINGTON

Present: Councillor Alan Baines (Vice Chair of Planning)
Councillor Mark Harris (Planning Committee Member)
Councillor Peter Richardson (Planning Committee Member)

Teresa Strange (Clerk, Melksham Without)
Fiona Dey (Parish Officer, Melksham Without)

Amy Welbourn (Stakeholder Engagement, Aureos)
Matthew Horton

Amy and Matt provided an update on the ongoing works:

Corsham Road Closure (30 July – 5 September)

- Aureos confirmed that the planned closure of Corsham Road is scheduled to run from **30 July to 5 September**.
- The programme has been planned to maximise the school summer holidays and minimise disruption to local traffic.
- Members discussed the proposed traffic management arrangements, access for residents and the sequencing of the works.
- A resident who has already raised concerns will be sent Amy's contact details
- Amy advised that notification letters would be sent to residents to arrive 2 weeks before the work starts (as per SSE policy).
- Amy advised that she was meeting key stakeholders such as the Shaw Primary School, Christ's Church, Mavern House Care Home and Whitley Golf Club to share the details and discuss any concerns in person.

Other Works

- Two way traffic lights on the junction of Shaw Hill (A365) and Corsham Road (30 July for 2 weeks)
- Closure of Top Lane at the junction with Corsham Road – from **7 September** for 1 week
- Three-way traffic lights at the junction of Corsham Road with Westlands Lane – 1 week following the work on Top Lane

Aureos advised that, to their understanding, Verdant Energy were no longer planning to use Top Lane for their cable route to Studley Solar Farm and were seeking a route across farmland

Westlands Lane

- Aureos advised that they taken part in a walk of Westlands Lane with Wiltshire Council (Mark Taylor) and had addressed the four remediation

points raised. It was noted that Aureos have been responsible for remediation of one verge and Verdant Energy are responsible for the opposite verge, and that Verdant Energy appear to have not completed their remediation work.

- Aureos confirmed that, in their view, their remediation works are complete and that if the parish council wanted to raise further concerns, they should be directed to Wiltshire Council.
- Councillors disagreed that the remediation had been satisfactorily completed.
- Amy committed to raising on-going concerns with rutting in the verges at a meeting with Wiltshire Council tomorrow and would ask them to reach out to the parish council. A multi-party walk of Westlands Lane was suggested.
- Councillors raised concerns about the deteriorating condition of the Westlands Lane road surface and questioned why local taxpayers should bear the cost of repairs where damage had been exacerbated by the cumulative impact of works undertaken by Aureos, Verdant Energy, Wick Solar Farm and National Grid. The Clerk asked whether the *extraordinary traffic* provisions under Section 59 of the Highways Act 1980 might be applicable in these circumstances.
- Aureos stated that the road surface was 'dead' before their work and that their work had no additional impact on the road surface.

Corsham Road Culvert

- The Clerk reported that the culvert has been jetted twice and a camera survey had been completed. These investigations identified it was blocked near Mavern House and confirmed that the pipe does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate flow. It was noted that Atkins has provided costings for a scheme to replace the culvert and to possibly throttle the pipe.
- Aureos would not be able to undertake the work as it is outside their expertise and would need to be supported by a flood risk assessment.
- Councillors questioned whether Wiltshire Council could take advantage of the closure of Corsham Road to undertake the work themselves (while avoiding the legal costs associated with road closure).
- It was proposed that the Parish Council ask Wiltshire Council to raise the option of using the road closure with Aureos.

Community Benefit

- Members queried the potential Community Benefit projects being undertaken by Aureos.
- The possible extension and resurfacing of the **Shaw Village Hall car park** was discussed. Matt felt that due to the large area and cost it was unlikely to be progressed.
- Aureos will review alternative proposals previously submitted by the Parish Council. During the discussion, Aureos indicated a greater willingness to support initiatives involving manpower and/or plant provision—such as excavation works for extending the car park—rather than options requiring significant financial contributions.

- It was suggested that a representative from Shaw Village Hall engage directly with Aureos to explore suitable community benefit opportunities linked to the car park project that align with Aureos' capabilities and preferred level of support. The plan for Shaw Village Hall carpark to be sent to Aureos.
- Amy explained that she will be visiting Shaw Primary School to explain their project and to promote STEM as Community Benefit.
- It was agreed that discussions on Community Benefit projects would continue as the scheme progresses.

A further liaison meeting will be arranged to review progress ahead of the next phase of works (September 2026).

Meeting closed at 11:00am

Appendix 3

NOTES OF MEETING WITH WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST ON WEDNESDAY 1st JULY 2026 AT 11:00AM RE: MELKSHAM LINK PROJECT AND PROPOSED MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Present

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (WBCT)

- Ron Crook WBCT
- Mike Gibbin WBCT CEO
- Howard Wilson WBCT Branch Chairman
- Paul Leanarts (Melksham Link)
- Denis Hellewell (Melksham Link)

Melksham Without Parish Council (MWPC)

- Councillor Martin Haffenden
- Councillor Alan Baines
- Councillor Richard Wood
- Councillor Mark Harris
- Councillor Peter Richardson
- Fiona Dey (Parish Officer)

Also present

- Hayley Bell (CEO, Melksham Town Council)
- Councillor Saffi Rabey (Melksham Town Council)

Introduction

WBCT thanked the Parish Council for inviting the Trust to present its proposals and explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the Trust and the Parish Council could work together more closely. It was emphasised that the priority was to establish good communication, develop a constructive working relationship and agree a process for raising and resolving issues at an early stage. The Trust wished to ensure that the aims of the project and the benefits for the local community remained clearly understood.

The Trust presented its long-term vision for the Melksham Link project, outlining the proposals to reconnect Melksham to the Kennet & Avon Canal, together with associated environmental and recreational benefits. Significant economic benefits were highlighted, together with health and well-being benefits.

Discussion took place regarding planning matters affecting the canal route.

Project Update and Planning Matters

The Trust explained that the planning application, which was submitted in 2012, had been subject to a number of objections from the Environment Agency. They noted that given the time period, some previously submitted surveys now need to be reviewed/repeated.

The Trust felt that they were moving towards a more positive position and hoped that the application would progress towards the end of this year.

Questions and Answers

Q: How does the Trust work with housing developers?

A: The Trust's position is to stay neutral on all developments. However, where a development impacts the proposed canal route, it works with the developer to ensure that the canal is fully integrated into the scheme.

The Trust noted that although Section 106 funding is available from developments, it is not reliant on this and has other sources of funding.

As the Trust is not always aware of pre-application meetings, the Parish Council could assist by ensuring developers are aware of the canal proposals at an early stage, so that opportunities can be incorporated into development layouts where appropriate.

Q: What is the position regarding the Environment Agency (EA)?

A: The Trust outlined the following possible scenarios:

- EA objections are resolved → Wiltshire Council approves the application.
- EA objections remain → Wiltshire Council refuses the application → WBCT appeals.
- EA objections remain → Wiltshire Council approves the application → EA requests a judicial review.

Q: What happens when the canal reaches Melksham?

A: The canal joins the River Avon, which will be made navigable.

Q: What is happening with the sluice and weir?

A: The sluice and weir will be replaced. There is a question about ownership of the sluice to be resolved.

Q: How will the river and canal route be joined north of Melksham?

A: Three locks are planned to bring the river up to the level of the canal. However, this is not part of the Melksham Link project, which ends at the Adventure Centre on the river in Melksham.

Discussion also covered the proposed swing bridge at Berryfield and the importance of ensuring that the various development sites in Berryfield connected together coherently.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Trust explained that the proposed Memorandum of Understanding would not be a legally binding agreement but would provide a framework for cooperation between the Canal Trust and the Parish Council.

Discussion covered:

- establishing regular communication between both organisations;
- sharing information at an early stage;
- agreeing how concerns could be raised and addressed before becoming issues;
- supporting shared objectives for planning, regeneration, biodiversity and community engagement; and
- ensuring continuity despite changes in councillors or Trust volunteers.

It was emphasised that the MoU should be viewed as a "best endeavours" agreement rather than a contractual commitment and that the purpose of the MoU was to improve communication rather than restrict either organisation.

The Trust stressed that the wording could be amended if required to reflect the intentions of both parties more clearly.

The Trust noted that it already had a number of successful Memoranda of Understanding with other organisations and considered that a similar arrangement with Melksham Without Parish Council would provide a useful framework for future cooperation.

It was confirmed that Melksham Town Council had already agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with WBCT. The Trust agreed that a presentation to Melksham Town Council would also be worthwhile.

Next Steps

It was proposed that:

- the draft Memorandum of Understanding would be reviewed jointly;
- wording would be amended where necessary to ensure that it clearly reflected a collaborative, non-binding agreement;
- both organisations would continue to share information at an early stage, particularly where planning applications or developer discussions could affect the canal route;

Meeting closed at 12:15 pm