

Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Scoping Report

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

December 2022

Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
V1.0	12 th September 2022	Initial version for neighbourhood group comment	30 th November 2022	Teresa Strange	Parish Clerk
V2.0	23 rd December 2022	Final for consultation	23 rd December 2022	Nick Chisholm- Batten	Technical Director

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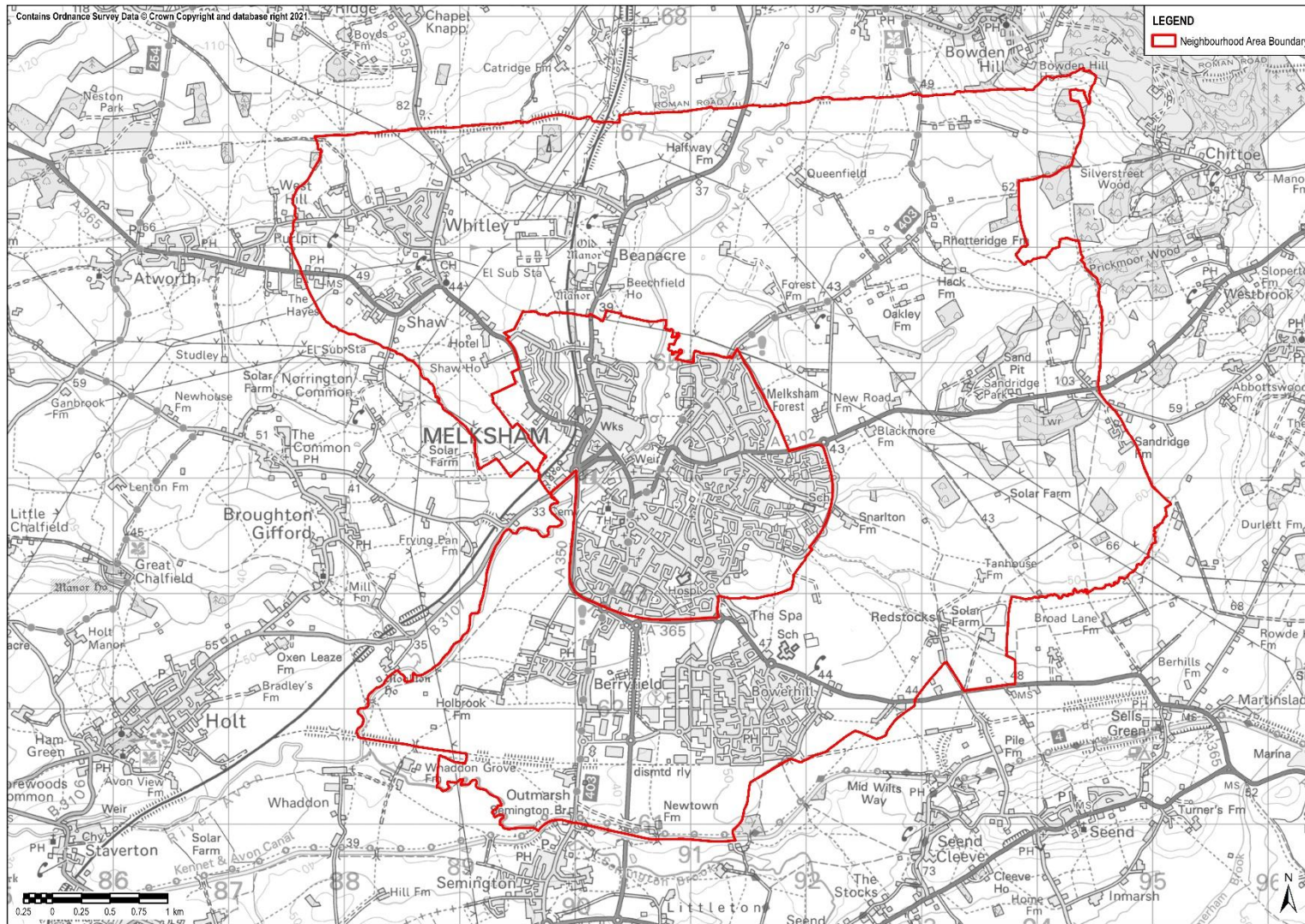


Figure 1.1: Neighbourhood area boundary covering the parishes of Melksham Town and Melksham Without

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, hereafter referred to as the JMNP2.
- 1.2 In July 2021, the JMNP1 was ‘made’ for the period 2020-2026. However, the JMNP Steering Group are undertaking an early review and refresh of the ‘made’ JMNP1 in light of the latest national policy requirements (with respect to the updated National Planning Policy Framework which was published in July 2021) and emerging local policy requirements within Wiltshire’s Local Plan Review process which is ongoing at present (including but not limited to housing numbers and the climate emergency).
- 1.3 The JMNP2 is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011¹ and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012², and in the context of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015-2026³. Due regard is also given to the Wiltshire Local Plan Review⁴. The key information relating to the JMNP2 is presented in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Key information relating to the JMNP2

Name of Responsible Authority	Wiltshire Council
Title of Plan	Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 (JMNP2)
Subject	Neighbourhood planning
Purpose	<p>The JMNP2 is being prepared as a neighbourhood plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The JMNP2 is being prepared in the context of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2012-2026. Due regard is also given to Wiltshire’s emerging Local Plan Review.</p> <p>The JMNP2 will be used to guide and shape development within the neighbourhood area.</p>
Timescale	To 2036
Area covered by the plan	The neighbourhood area covers the civil parishes of Melksham and Melksham Without, located in Wiltshire, as shown in Figure 1.1 above.
Summary of content	The JMNP2 will set out a vision, strategy, and range of policies for the neighbourhood area.
Plan contact point	<p>Teresa Strange, Melksham Without Parish Council Clerk: clerk@melkshamwithout-pc.gov.uk</p> <p>Linda Roberts, Melksham Town Council Clerk: mailto:linda.roberts@melksham-tc.gov.uk</p>

¹ UK Government (2011) ‘Localism Act 2011’ can be accessed [here](#).

² UK Government (2012) ‘The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012’ can be accessed [here](#).

³ Wiltshire Council (2022) ‘Wiltshire Core Strategy’ can be accessed [here](#).

⁴ Wiltshire Council (2022) ‘Local Plan Review’ can be accessed [here](#).

Planning policy context

- 1.4 The Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015-2026 was adopted in 2015 and forms part of the development plan for the administrative area of Wiltshire. Within Core Policy 1, Melksham is identified as a 'market town'; this type of settlement "*has the ability to support sustainable patterns of living in Wiltshire through their current levels of facilities, services and employment opportunities*". Market towns have the potential for significant development that will increase homes and jobs, allowing for the maintenance and enhancement of existing services and facilities. There are other large and small villages within the neighbourhood area, and development in these areas is expected to be more limited to reflect the role and function of these settlements.
- 1.5 Wiltshire Council are currently undertaking a Local Plan Review⁵. Regulation 18 consultation on the emerging spatial strategy was completed between January and March 2021, with the outcomes of this consultation informing the preparation of the draft Local Plan. With respect to housing numbers, the emerging Local Plan Review (within the 'Planning for Melksham' section of the Regulation 18 consultation document) provides an indicative housing target of 2,585 dwellings for the Melksham area during the plan period (up until 2036). The housing requirements are to be delivered through the following:
- existing commitments and completions (i.e., sites which have permission already, and are either currently under construction or are likely to commence in due course),
 - strategic scale site allocations to come forward through the emerging Local Plan Review (i.e., likely large greenfield sites which will be subject to detail assessment), and
 - a proportion of homes to be found through neighbourhood plan allocations.
- 1.6 Whilst the housing numbers are potentially subject to change as the emerging Local Plan Review progresses, Wiltshire Council have provided an indicative target of 150-250 homes to be delivered as allocations through the JMNP2. It is anticipated that the remaining housing targets will be met through existing completions and commitments and strategic allocations (as discussed).
- 1.7 Neighbourhood plans will form part of the development plan for Wiltshire, alongside, but not as a replacement for the Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Wiltshire, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

⁵ Wiltshire Council (2021): 'Local Plan Review Consultation', can be accessed [here](#)

SEA for the JMNP2

SEA screening for the JMNP2

1.8 In August 2022, Wiltshire Council advised that in their view an SEA process was likely to be required for the JMNP2. Which was later confirmed by the statutory consultees for SEA (Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency) in their SEA Screening responses.

1.9 A Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. The SEA Screening decision concludes:

“The draft JMNP2 “is exploring the potential to identify further site allocations with capacity to make a meaningful contribution to the identified community area housing requirement...it is likely that the neighbourhood plan review will consider allocation of land for between 150 to 250 homes.

“A schedule showing 89 potential development sites is attached. It is not known which sites will be allocated or for how many dwellings. The JMNP2 may exceed the figures stated. So, a precautionary approach is taken to the likelihood of significance of effects. There is the potential for significant effects on landscapes, biodiversity, flood risk, on designated and undesignated heritage assets and their settings and on various other areas of environmental importance.

“For this reason, it is considered likely that site allocations alone will have the potential to have significant environmental effects.”

1.10 Considering this screening outcome, an SEA process is being undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).

SEA explained

1.11 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues.

1.12 The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the JMNP2 seeks to maximise the emerging plan’s contribution to sustainable development.

1.13 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:

- i. When deciding on ‘the scope and level of detail of the information’ which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues;
- ii. A report (the ‘Environmental Report’) is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e. the draft JMNP2) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e. discusses ‘likely significant effects’ that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

SEA scoping explained

1.14 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:

- Exploring the policy context for the JMNP2 and SEA to summarise the key messages arising.
- Establishing the baseline for the SEA (i.e. the current and future situation in the area in the absence of the JMNP2) to help identify the plan's likely significant effects.
- Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA; and
- Considering this information to develop an SEA Framework comprising SEA objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment.

1.15 The scope is explored and presented under a series of key environmental themes as follows:

- Air quality
- Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Climate change (including flood risk)
- Community wellbeing
- Historic environment
- Land, soil, and water resources
- Landscape
- Transportation

1.16 The selected environmental themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive.⁶ These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects. The discussion of the scoping information for each theme is presented in **Chapters 2 to 9**, along with a summary of the key issues and the proposed SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions. Each proposal within the emerging JMNP2 will be assessed consistently using this Framework.

⁶ The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'

2. Air Quality

Focus of theme

- 2.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the air quality SEA theme. The theme focuses on air pollution sources, air quality hotspots, and air quality management within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

- 2.2 **Table 2.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 2.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the air quality SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
Environment Act	2021
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The Clean Air Strategy	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations	2017
Environment Act	1995
Wiltshire Council 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report	2021
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council Air Quality Strategy 2019-2024	2019
Wiltshire Council Air Quality Action Plan	2015
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

- 2.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:
- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which seek to reduce or mitigate air quality impacts during development whilst simultaneously taking advantage of opportunities to improve air quality. Measures include, but are not limited to; sustainable transport solutions, limiting the need to travel, compliance with pollutant limits or objectives, and the enhancement of green infrastructure. Smaller-scale development should consider the potential for cumulative effects in relation to air quality. The NPPF also states that planning policies should contribute towards compliance with pollutant limit levels or national objectives; acknowledging air quality management areas, clean air zones and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Moreover, the NPPF indicates that new and existing developments

should be prevented from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.

- The Clean Air Strategy outlines how the government will tackle all sources of air pollution. The strategy proposes goals to cut public exposure to particulate matter pollution and outlines required action to meet these goals. Furthermore, it seeks to recognise wider sources that cause poor air quality, such as diffuse sources and smaller contributors. The proposed measures include new legislation and local powers to act in areas with air pollution issues. The Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire (2019-2024) seeks to reflect this strategy on a more localised scale.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan establishes how the government will expand net gain approaches to include air quality improvements, such as planting more trees in urban areas and changing fuel supplies. In particular, 'Goal 1 Clean air' and the policies contained within 'Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste' directly relate to the air quality SEA theme.
- The UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide is focused on lowering nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions to statutory limits as quickly as possible. The plan acknowledges that an improvement in air quality and a reduction in emissions is important and aims to position the UK at the forefront of vehicle innovation by making motoring cleaner.
- Local authorities are required to monitor air quality across the district, report regularly to Defra and act where nationally set levels and limits of pollutants are likely to be exceeded under Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995). Monitoring is undertaken to assess levels of nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, benzene, and particulates. Where exceedances exist, areas are declared as air quality management areas (AQMAs) and local authorities are required to produce an air quality action plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in the area. Under Schedule 11 in the Environment Act (2021), a local authority must identify any parts of its area in which it appears air quality standards or objectives are not likely to be achieved within the relevant period. Additionally, local authorities must also identify relevant sources of emissions that are considered partly or wholly responsible for failing to achieve air quality standards or objectives in the area. As such, the Wiltshire 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) is the last available report for the neighbourhood area; fulfilling the requirements of the local air quality management (LAQM) as set out in Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995).
- The Air Quality Action Plan for Wiltshire sets out "the strategic and locally generated actions that will be implemented to improve air quality and work towards meeting the air quality objectives." This plan builds off the Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire (2019-2024) and identifies 17 strategic actions that will help to achieve the goal of reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter in Wiltshire. A sample of those strategic actions include:
 - Establish community air quality action plan groups under the Area Boards.

- Provide air quality data and information to Area Boards to assist with the production of Community Air Quality Action Plans and Community Neighbourhood Plans.
- Integrate air quality into wider policies and strategies within the council and the adoption of Core Policy 55 in the Wiltshire Core Strategy.
- Integrate green infrastructure considerations into Wiltshire Council policy and strategy and to adopt the Wiltshire Council Green Infrastructure Strategy to support Core Policy 52 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.
- Integrate wider climate change policies that share common goals on carbon and nitrogen dioxide reduction into Wiltshire strategies and policies.
- Develop in conjunction with Public Health Wiltshire a text alert system which will be targeted at people with respiratory health issues.
- The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core strategy. In particular, this includes:
 - Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.
 - Core Policy 55: Air Quality; and
 - Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to improve air quality by promoting sustainable transport, active transport and general air quality improvements.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

- 2.4 According to the Wiltshire Council 2021 Air Quality ASR, there are no AQMAs within the neighbourhood area. However, new development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to indirectly impact on AQMAs within Wiltshire. These AQMAs are located within Salisbury (three in this settlement), Westbury, Calne, Marlborough and Bradford-on-Avon. Although it is expected that most residents in the neighbourhood area will travel to Melksham town centre to access facilities and services, indirect impacts on these AQMAs could be expected due to potential increases in traffic levels between the neighbourhood area and locations like Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury and Devizes.
- 2.5 Air quality monitoring in Wiltshire is undertaken for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM₁₀), the main source for these pollutants is local traffic emissions caused by traffic volume, road layout, topography and high concentrations of pollutants. The annual national objective for both NO₂ and PM₁₀ is 40 ug/m³ maximum. Data from pollutant monitoring undertaken in 2021 demonstrates the average NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels have been decreasing, which is concluded to be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns and restrictions. There were three exceedances of the 24 hour mean for PM₁₀ were reported, all in Devizes.

Future baseline

2.6 Future development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to increase traffic, congestion, and their associated emissions. In the absence of suitable planning and mitigation, this could lead to a deterioration in air quality. Therefore, mitigation measures should be incorporated into the design of new development areas to maintain (and where possible, improve) air quality. It is considered that the present shift towards the use of sustainable transportation, including active travel modes and electric vehicle use, has the potential to support longer term air quality improvements. Furthermore, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a shift towards employees working from home, which also contributes to emissions reduction. Planning for these factors during development will have a positive impact on air quality.

Key issues

2.7 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues:

- According to data from 2021, there are no AQMAs in the neighbourhood area. However, it could be expected that development in the neighbourhood area could increase traffic flows to nearby locations like Bradford-on-Avon, Devizes and Westbury, which could impact on AQMAs.
- Designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area are potentially sensitive to air pollution issues. The effects of the neighbourhood plan in relation to these concerns will be explored in the 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' SEA theme in Chapter 3.
- The JMNP2 could present opportunities to improve accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections. These opportunities will be explored in the 'Community Wellbeing' and 'Transportation' SEA themes in Chapter 5 and Chapter 9.
- The effects of traffic and congestion will be explored in the 'Transportation and movement' SEA theme in Chapter 9.

Proposed SEA objective

2.8 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Air quality	Deliver improvements in air quality in the neighbourhood area.

2.9 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Reduce emissions of pollutants from transport?
- Promote the use of low emission vehicles?
- Promote enhancements in sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, and public transport?
- Promote enhancements to green infrastructure networks to facilitate increased absorption and dissipation of NO₂, PM₁₀ and other pollutants?

3. Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Focus of theme

3.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA theme. The theme focuses on nature conservation designations, geological sites, and habitats and species in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

3.2 **Table 3.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 3.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
Environment Act 2021	2021
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework	2012
The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (Natural Environment White Paper)	2011
Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services	2011
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act	2006
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	1994
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan	2008

3.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The Environment Act makes provision for biodiversity gain to be a condition of planning permission in England, in addition to creating biodiversity gain site registers and biodiversity credits. It recognises there is a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and encourages the identification of suitable areas through biodiversity reports and local nature recovery strategies. Furthermore, habitat maps are expected to include recovery and enhancement areas which are currently, or could become, important for biodiversity.
- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, which indicate that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance

soils and sites of biodiversity and / or geological value. Plans should also identify, map, and safeguard components of wider ecological networks, promote positive action for priority habitats and species, and pursue opportunities to secure biodiversity net gains. The NPPF also states that if development causes substantial harm and cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or compensated, then planning permission should be refused.

- The NPPF also supports the establishment and enhancement of habitat networks and green infrastructure to allow for more resilience to current and future pressures for biodiversity.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan places importance on improvements to the natural environment, such as achieving clean air and water, reducing environmental hazard risk, and encouraging sustainable resource use. This will be accomplished through a variety of actions including implementing sustainable land management, engaging in nature recovery, and connecting people to the environment.
- The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a response to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for the development and enforcement of national strategies and associated action plans to identify, conserve and protect existing biological diversity, and to enhance it wherever possible. In particular, the BAP identifies priority species and habitats that are most threatened and require conservation action. The UK BAP is succeeded by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework, which aims to ensure that biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored, and wisely used, and ecosystem services are maintained. This helps to sustain a healthy planet that delivers essential benefits for everyone.
- The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) sets out the importance of a healthy, functioning natural environment to sustaining economic growth, prospering communities, and personal wellbeing. It adopts a landscape approach to protect and enhance biodiversity and aims to create a green economy, whereby the economic growth and the health of natural resources sustain each other.
- Reflecting the commitments within the NEWP, Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services aims to stop overall biodiversity loss, support healthy and well-functioning ecosystems, and establish coherent ecological networks.
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act details nature protection in the UK, which includes wildlife, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and National Parks. It extends the UK Government's duty to biodiversity and establishes the role of Natural England, which is responsible for safeguarding England's natural environment, making sure it is protected and improved whilst ensuring people enjoy, understand, and access it.
- The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan contains habitat action plans for the variety of habitats found across the area. It sets out the following priorities for the area:
 - To prioritise action required to conserve Wiltshire's biodiversity.
 - To provide baseline information on our current knowledge.

- To coordinate and focus action for biodiversity by creating a cohesive local partnership.
- To raise awareness among all sectors in Wiltshire – conservation, public, private, local communities.
- To provide a framework for monitoring; and
- To identify current issues and set out targets to work towards.
- The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. In particular, this includes:
 - Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity; and
 - Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to enhance biodiversity and geodiversity by enhancing blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity itself.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

3.4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are protected to conserve their wildlife and / or geological value. Within the neighbourhood area there is one SSSI which partly overlaps with the neighbourhood area, with two additional SSSIs located within proximity to the boundary to the south of the neighbourhood area. The location of these designations is shown in **Figure 3.1** at the end of this chapter. Further information is provided below:

- Part of the Spye Park SSSI overlaps with the neighbourhood area to north-east within Upper Selves Wood and Lower Selves Wood. Covering a total area of 89.64 ha, it is designated for its extensive habitat mosaic and geology that creates a rich habitat for epiphytic lichens, breeding woodland birds and diverse insect communities. According to the latest condition survey, this SSSI was 100% in unfavourable-recovering condition⁷.
- Seend Cleeve Quarry SSSI is within 1 km of the neighbourhood area boundary to the south. Covering a total 3.05 ha, it is designated for its geology, which is an example of the Oxfordian Stage, and provides information on the Jurassic System. According to the latest condition survey, this SSSI was 100% in unfavourable-declining condition⁸.
- Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting SSSI is approximately 1.2 km south of the neighbourhood area. Covering a total of 2.3 ha, it is designated for its Lower Greensand geology and diverse fauna communities. According to the latest condition survey, this SSSI was 100% in favourable condition⁹.

3.5 SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a GIS tool/dataset that map zones around each SSSI according to their sensitivities. They specify the types of

⁷ Natural England (no date) 'Spye Park SSSI' can be accessed [here](#).

⁸ Natural England (no date) 'Seend Cleeve Quarry SSSI' can be accessed [here](#).

⁹ Natural England (no date) 'Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting SSSI' can be accessed [here](#).

development that have the potential to have adverse impacts at a given location, and thresholds of development which indicate a need to consult Natural England. In this respect, the north-east corner of the neighbourhood area (to the east of Hanging Wood, Frogditch Farm and Selves Farm) is likely to overlap with IRZs typical of the kind of development the neighbourhood plan may potentially bring forward (residential development of 100 units or more, and any residential development of 50 or more houses outside existing settlements / urban areas). In this respect, consultation with Natural England may be required for any applications that come forward in these locations.

Locally important sites

- 3.6 The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report¹⁰ identifies 14 local wildlife sites within the neighbourhood area, which includes areas of ancient woodland, as well as the River Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal. Of note is Conigre Mead Nature Reserve, which was bought by local people and given as a nature reserve to Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in 1989. It is now a valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife, including wild meadow plant species, insects, birds and small mammals (woodmice and bats). These wildlife sites are shown in **Figure 3.2** overleaf.

¹⁰ Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2021) 'Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report' can be accessed [here](#).

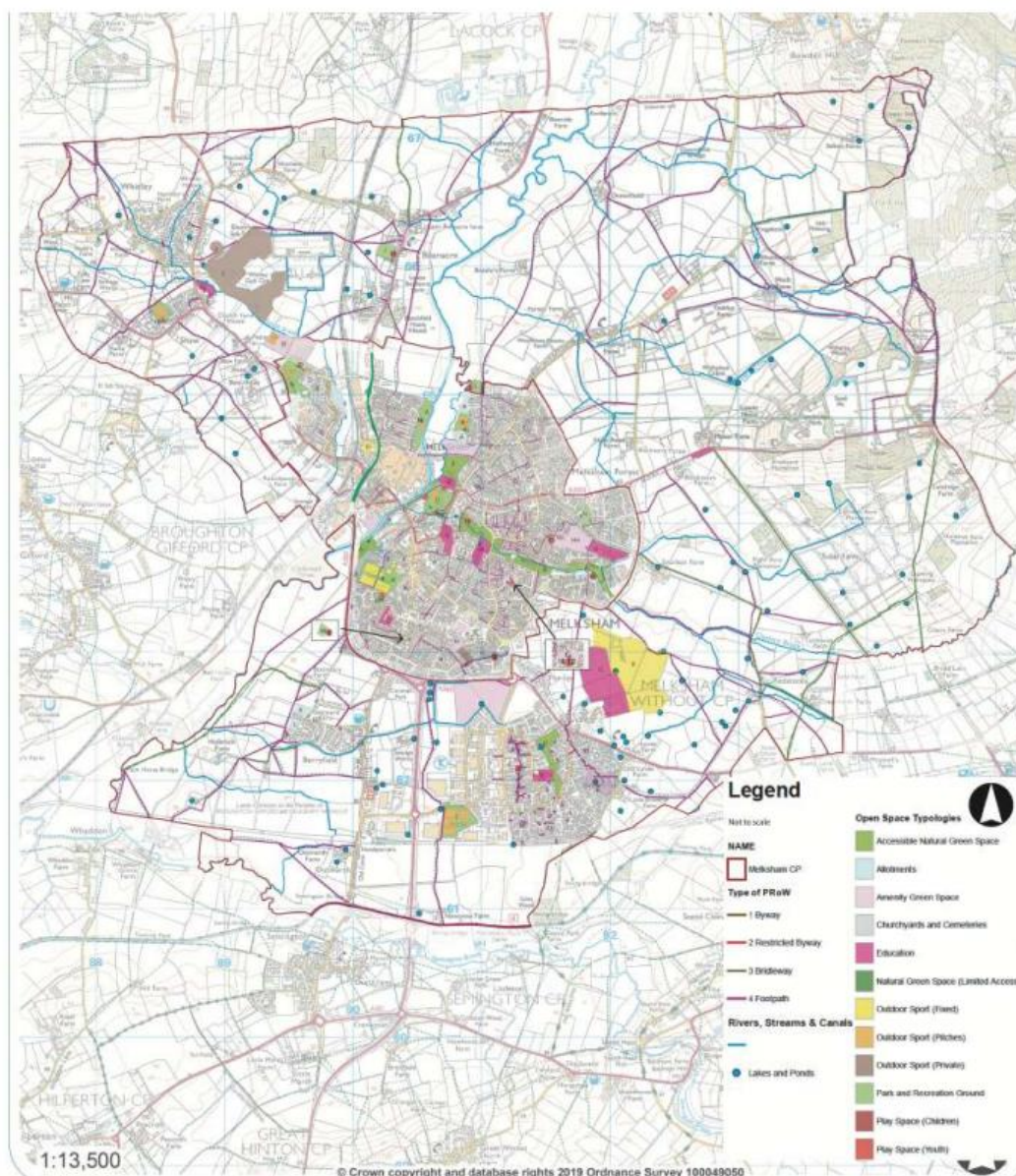


Figure 3.2: Green infrastructure assets and priorities (taken from the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report)

Priority habitats and species

- 3.7 There are a variety of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority habitats within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area. This includes ancient woodland, deciduous woodland, traditional orchards, wood pasture and parkland, lowland fens, and good quality semi-improved grassland. The location of the habitats is shown in **Figure 3.3** at the end of this chapter.
- 3.8 Ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish. It is considered important for its wildlife (often including rare and threatened species), and soils. Ancient woodland includes land that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. This means the following is included under its designation:
- Ancient semi-natural woodland mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration; and

- Plantations on ancient woodland sites - replanted with conifer and broadleaved trees that retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi¹¹.
- 3.9 Within the neighbourhood area there are five areas of ancient woodland - Daniel's Wood to the north-west of Beanacre, Upper Selves Wood and Lower Selves Wood to the north-east, Hanging Wood north of the A3102 Sandridge Hill and Morass Wood south of Sandridge Tower.
- 3.10 The national habitat network is a set of maps that work to help identify areas for future habitat creation and restoration at a landscape scale¹². In terms of the national habitat network, there are areas of Network Enhancement Zone 1 to the south of Shaw, to the north of Beanacre and in the north-east corner. Network Enhancement Zone 1 is deemed most suitable for habitat re-creation supporting the primary habitat. Additionally, there are areas of Network Enhancement Zone 2 running through Melksham and to the east of the neighbourhood area – Network Enhancement Zone 2 is most suitable for new habitats and green infrastructure. There is also a large area of Network Expansion Zone to the north – this is identified as a suitable location for connecting and linking up habitats across a landscape through new habitat creation.
- 3.11 The Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC)¹³ will contain archives of protected and notable species within Wiltshire and Swindon, including those species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981¹⁴ and under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The BAP Priority Habitats and ecological designations within and surrounding the neighbourhood area are likely to support populations of protected species.

Future baseline

- 3.12 Habitats and species will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within the neighbourhood area, with the potential for negative impacts on the wider ecological network. This may include a loss of habitats and impacts on biodiversity networks, which may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. This has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition of habitats.
- 3.13 The neighbourhood area presents an opportunity to maximise benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of important habitats, species, and designated sites at an early stage of planning for future growth. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be important to not only protect and enhance important habitats, but also the connections between them. It will be crucial to effectively coordinate the delivery of new development to ensure that opportunities to improve green infrastructure and ecological corridors are maximised within the neighbourhood area.

¹¹ GOV.UK (2022) 'Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions' can be accessed [here](#).

¹² Natural England (2020) 'National Habitat Network Maps' can be accessed [here](#).

¹³ The Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) website can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁴ UK Government (1981) 'The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981' can be accessed [here](#).

Key issues

3.14 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity:

- Nationally designated sites within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area include three SSSIs.
- Sections of the neighbourhood area overlap with SSSI IRZs for the types and scale of development which may come forward be brought forward, especially to the east of the neighbourhood area and the north-eastern sections. It is therefore likely that Natural England will need to be consulted if development is proposed in these areas.
- There are 14 identified locally important sites in the neighbourhood area, including Conigre Mead Nature Reserve.
- There are a variety of BAP Priority Habitats within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area.

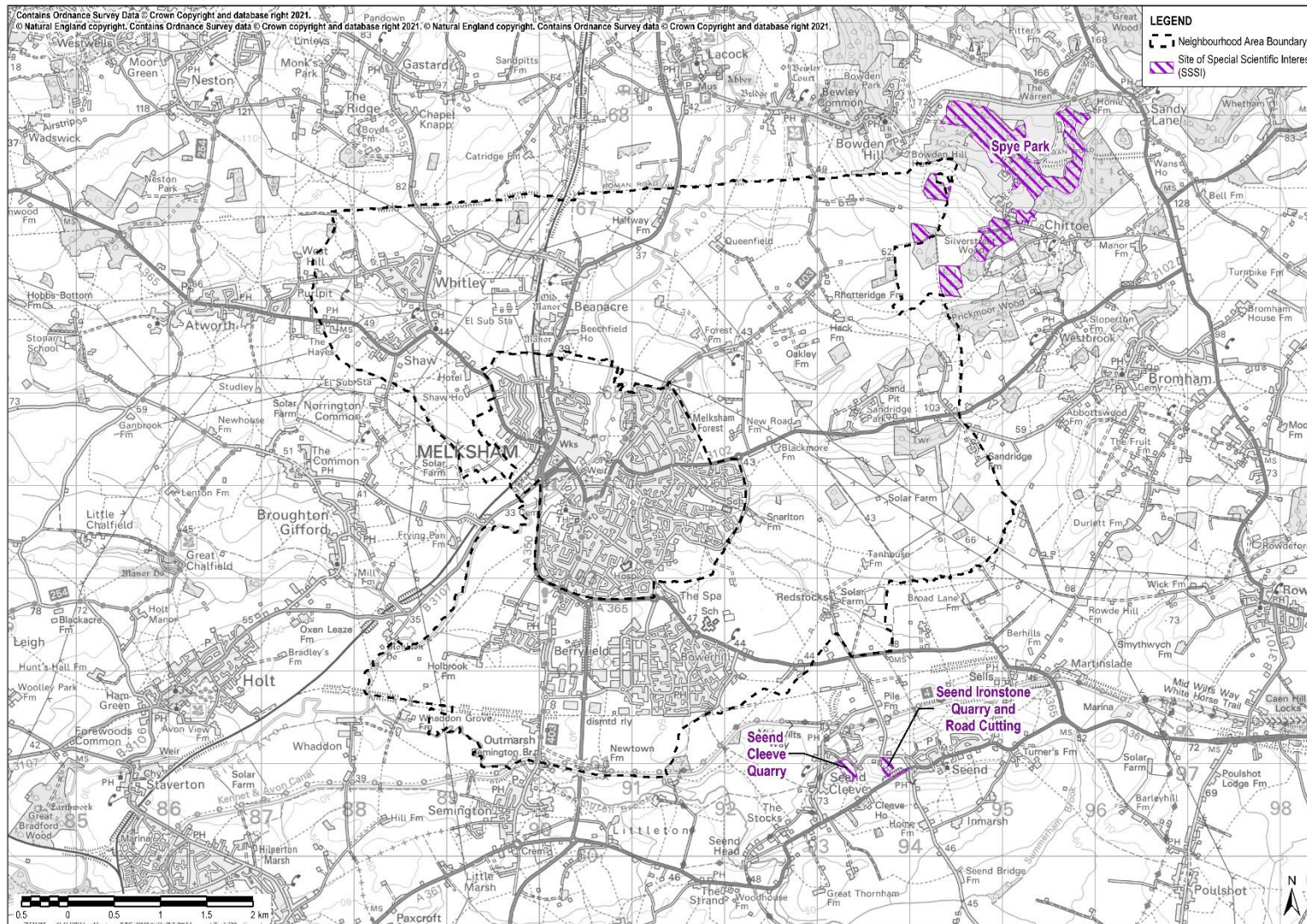
Proposed SEA objective

3.15 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

3.16 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Avoid or, if not possible, minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, including nationally designated sites, and provide net gains where possible?
- Support the integrity of the designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity located within proximity to the neighbourhood area?
- Protect and enhance habitats, semi-natural habitats, species, and the ecological network connecting them?
- Support the national habitat network, particularly Network Enhancement Zone 1 and identified restorable habitat?
- Achieve biodiversity net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure services?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
- Support and promote access to and interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?



Document Path: \\na.aecomnet.com\ifs\EMEA\Basingstoke\UKBAS1\Legacy\UKBAS1\PFIL\0014400 - Management Services\5004 - Information Systems\60571087_Neighbourhood_Plan_CRB_2018_2022\02_Maps\Melksham NPI\Biodiversity Designations.mxd

Figure 3.1: Biodiversity designations within the neighbourhood area

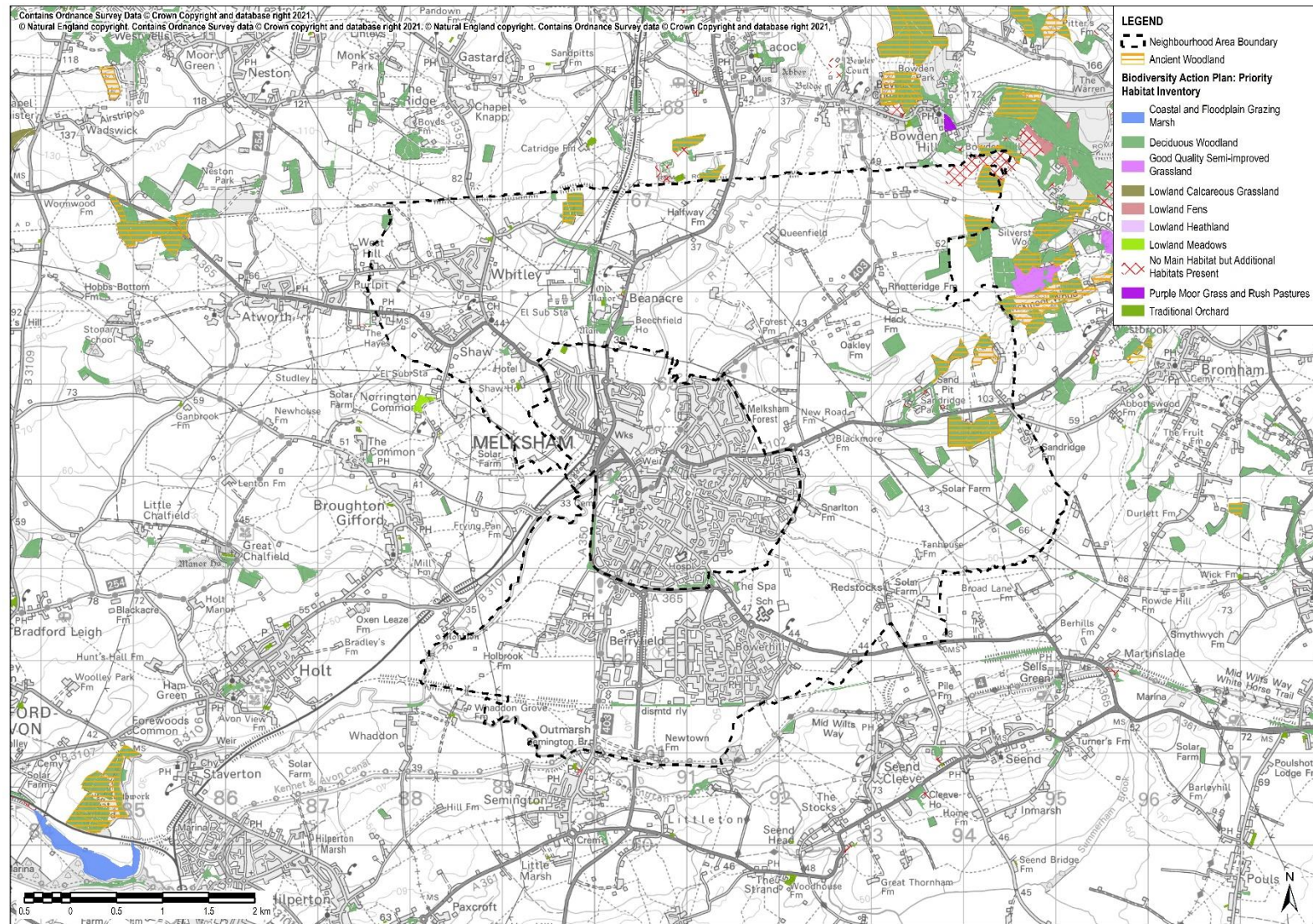


Figure 3.3: BAP Priority Habitats within the neighbourhood area

4. Climate Change

Focus of theme

4.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the climate change SEA theme. The theme focuses on contributions to climate change, the effects of climate change, climate change adaptation, and flood risk in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

4.2 **Table 4.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 4.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the climate change SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener	2021
National Infrastructure Assessment	2021
The UK Sixth Carbon Budget	2020
The Clean Air Strategy 2019	2019
The National Adaptation Programme and the Third Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting	2018
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
The Clean Growth Strategy	2017
UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017	2017
Flood and Water Management Act 2010	2010
Climate Change Act 2008	2008
Anthesis Reports - Wiltshire Council (downloadable from here)	2022
Wiltshire Climate Strategy 2022-2027	2022
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
JBA Consulting - Wiltshire Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	2019
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

4.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, including adopting a proactive planning approach to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies are expected to improve the

resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, avoid inappropriate development in the flood plain zone, and support the move to a low carbon economy. The NPPF recognises the potential for planning to shape places to better contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and deliver long-term resilience.

- The Clean Growth Strategy, Clean Air Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy are a collection of documents seeking to progress the government's commitment to becoming net zero by 2050 under the UK Climate Change Act 2008. The documents outline how the government will tackle air pollution sources whilst maintaining an affordable energy supply and increasing economic growth. This parallels with the 25 Year Environment Plan, which seeks to manage land resources sustainably, recover and reinstate nature, protect soils and habitats, increase resource efficiency, improve water quality, and connect people with the environment. Of note in the 25 Year Environment Plan are the following: 'Chapter 1: Using and managing land sustainably', 'Chapter 6: Protecting and improving the global environment', 'Goal 4: A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought' and 'Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change'.
- The National Infrastructure Assessment is published every five years and analyses the UK's long-term economic infrastructure needs to create a strategic vision and recommendations. The baseline report states that climate change will increase pressures on all sectors, including economic infrastructure.
- The National Adaptation Programme outlines the government's response to the second Climate Change Risk Assessment, demonstrating the actions the government is currently taking and actions it will be taking in the future. It outlines risks that fit within the priority areas identified by the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017:
 - Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses, and infrastructure.
 - Risks to health, well-being, and productivity from high temperatures.
 - Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation, and industry.
 - Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils, and biodiversity.
 - Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
 - New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants, and animals.
- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 provides for better and more comprehensive management of flood risk for people, homes, and businesses, in addition to aiding in safeguarding community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges and protecting consumer water supplies. It also highlights alternatives to traditional engineering to flood risk management.
- The UK Climate Change Act 2008 establishes a framework to develop an economically viable emissions reduction path. The Climate Change Act

2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order of 2019 put in place the legally binding target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Act includes the following:

- The UK Government must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 100% of 1990 levels by 2050.
- The document requires the government to produce legally binding carbon budgets – a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period.
- The Act requires the government to assess and prepare for the risks and opportunities linked to climate change for the UK.
- The Sixth Carbon Budget is the legal limit of UK net greenhouse gas emissions and requires the country to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 relative to 1990 levels. This puts the country on track to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.
- Wiltshire Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019¹⁵; since this declaration, the council has sought to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group was set up for gather evidence and suggest recommendations on achieving net zero. An update on the current situation in July 2021¹⁶ reinstated the following priorities:
 - Growing the economy.
 - Strong communities.
 - Protecting the vulnerable; and
 - Working with partners.
- Wiltshire Council have commissioned an independent consultant to provide a technical study of the area's climate ambitions in order to clearly see a way forward and to visualise progress. The Anthesis reports set out a plan for climate action across six areas:
 - Buildings
 - Improving energy efficiency.
 - Reducing gas heating systems; and
 - Low carbon and energy efficient cooking, lighting and appliances.
 - Transport
 - Travelling shorter distances.
 - Driving less.
 - Switching to electric vehicles; and
 - Improving freight emissions
 - Waste
 - Reducing the quantity of waste; and

¹⁵ Wiltshire Council (2022) 'Climate emergency' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁶ Wiltshire Council (2021) 'Update on Council's response to the climate emergency' can be accessed [here](#).

- Increasing the recycling rate.
- Industry
 - Shifting away from fossil fuels; and
 - More efficient processes
- Natural environment
 - Increased tree coverage and tree planting.
 - Land use management; and
 - Livestock management.
- Energy supply
 - Increase solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity; and
 - Increase the capacity of other renewable technologies.

The reports also undertake an emissions analysis and recommend how changes to the carbon footprint can be achieved through a variety of activities, like decarbonisation efforts.

- The Wiltshire Climate Strategy builds on the current evidence base to outline how Wiltshire can reduce its impact on climate change and become climate neutral by 2030. The strategy is split into eight different sections:
 - Transport.
 - Homes and the Built Environment.
 - Natural environment, food and farming.
 - Energy.
 - Green economy.
 - Resources and waste.
 - Carbon neutral council; and
 - Strategies and targets timeline.

The strategy ensures the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient future is accessible and manageable for all, using the most up-to-date evidence to deliver benefits to the area.

- The Wiltshire Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) forms part of a comprehensive and robust evidence base for the Local Plan Review, which will set out a vision and framework for development in Wiltshire up to 2036. The SFRA will also be used to assess planning applications, and flood risk mapping information will be made available for developers for carrying out flood risk assessments.
- The Wiltshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has an overarching vision of ‘working together to manage local flood risk in Wiltshire.’ Several strategic measures are identified to address the following five objectives:
 - Improve knowledge regarding flood risk.
 - Improve protection from flooding.
 - Improve resilience to flooding.

- Improve the environment; and
- Improve communications and flooding issues.
- The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. In particular, this includes:
 - Core Policy 41: Sustainable construction and Low Carbon Energy.
 - Core Policy 42: Standalone Renewable Energy Installations.
 - Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.
 - Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.
 - Core Policy 67: Flood Risk; and
 - Core Policy 68: Water Resources.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to combat climate change by:
 - Tackling flood risk and promoting sustainable water management; and
 - Delivering sustainable design and construction methods in the built environment.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Contribution to climate change

- 4.4 The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order of 2019 requires carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the built environment to be monitored and recorded at the local authority level. The CO₂ emissions shown in **Figure 4.1** and **Figure 4.2** below are derived from data supplied by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy¹⁷.
- 4.5 As demonstrated by **Figure 4.1** overleaf, the largest contributing sector with regards to CO₂ emissions in Wiltshire was the industry and commercial sector until 2011, where the transportation sector contributed more and has continued to do so. The transport sector has been decreasing in terms of CO₂ emissions since 2017 but still remains the biggest emissions contributor in Wiltshire.
- 4.6 The introduction and uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) will contribute positively towards the reduction of road transport related emissions. In line with assumptions made by the Department for Transport's 'Road to Zero' report (2018)¹⁸, it is assumed that ULEV uptake will increase rapidly in the coming decade. Therefore, all vehicles could be ultra-low emission (powered either by hydrogen or electricity) by 2030, thus the CO₂ emissions from the transport sector have the potential to decrease.

¹⁷ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2020) 'UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2008' can be accessed [here](#). The data tables used to generate Figures 4.1 and 4.2 can be downloaded from this page.

¹⁸ Department for Transport (2018) 'The Road to Zero' can be accessed [here](#).

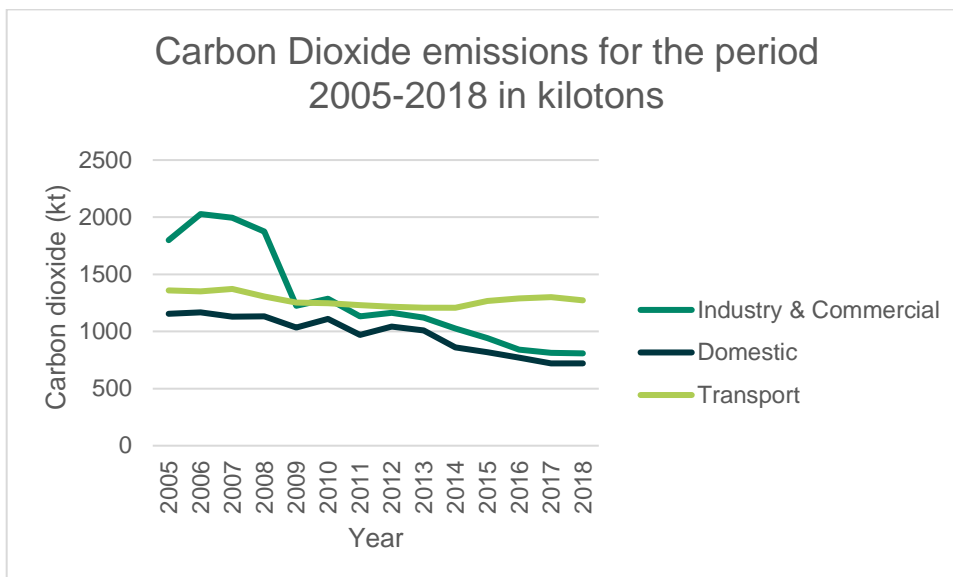


Figure 4.1: CO2 emissions in kilotons per year for each sector in Wiltshire (2005-2018)

4.7 **Figure 4.2** below indicates that CO₂ emissions per capita have been higher in Wiltshire than the average for South West England and the whole of England between 2005-2018. Wiltshire has experienced the greatest decrease in per capita emissions over the examined period; a decrease of 4.1 tons per capita. This is in comparison to an average of 3.2 tons per capita in South West England and 3.5 tons per capita for England.

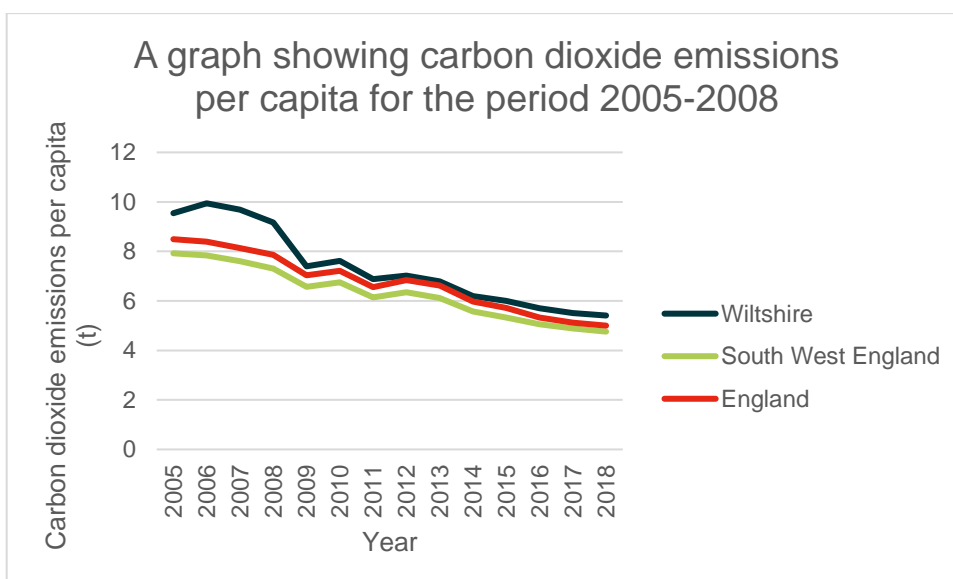


Figure 4.2: CO2 emissions per capita (in tons) for Wiltshire, the South West England region and the whole of England (2005-2018)

Potential effects of climate change

4.8 The UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) programme is a climate analysis tool that provides the most up-to-date assessment on potential future climatic changes in the UK based on climate model simulations¹⁹. Projections can be

¹⁹ Met Office (no date) 'UK Climate Projections (UKCP)' can be accessed [here](#).

downscaled to a regional level across the UK, allowing for specific evaluations of a selected area.

4.9 The UKCP18 projections conclude the effects of climate change for the South West, under the high emissions “worst case” scenario RCP8.5²⁰, are likely to be as follows (as compared to 1981-2000):

- 2021-2040:
 - An average 1.18 °C increase in mean winter temperatures;
 - An average 2.11 °C increase in mean summer temperatures;
 - An average 0.21 mm increase in mean winter precipitation rate; and
 - An average 0.35 mm decrease in mean summer precipitation rate.
- 2061-2080:
 - An average 2.95 °C increase in mean winter temperatures;
 - An average 5.07 °C increase in mean summer temperatures;
 - An average 0.86 mm increase in mean winter precipitation rate; and
 - An average 0.86 mm decrease in mean summer precipitation rate.

4.10 If these changes were to occur, the neighbourhood area would likely face a range of risks, including:

- Increases in cases of heat related illnesses and deaths during the summer period as well as illnesses and deaths related to exposure to sunlight;
- An increase in the risk of injuries and deaths caused by storm events, due to both the increase in quantity and magnitude;
- Changes to water resources, in terms of quality and quantity;
- An increased risk of flooding, including changes in vulnerability to 1 in 100-year floods, and a need to upgrade flood defences;
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding;
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their distribution, particularly their southern edge, and a spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution;
- Increased drought events, both in quantity and magnitude; and
- Heat related impacts to local infrastructure, e.g., road surfaces melting.

Flood risks

4.11 **Figure 4.3**²¹ overleaf indicates the areas within Flood Zones 2 and 3 within the neighbourhood area. The figure indicates that Whitley, Shaw, Melksham Town, Bowerhill and Beanacre are distinct communities within the neighbourhood area with differing flood risks due to the presence of the River Avon, its floodplains and its tributaries. A section of the A350 Western Way is also within

²⁰ The RCP 8.5 emissions scenario assumes there is a fast population growth (doubling the planet's population to reach 12 billion), the lowest rate of technological development, slow GDP growth, a massive increase in world poverty and high energy use and emissions. It is seen to be the 'worst case scenario' in which no climate change mitigation or adaptation techniques are engaged with.

²¹ GOV.UK (2021) 'Get flood risk information for planning in England' can be accessed [here](#).

Flood Zone 2 and 3 within Melksham and is in proximity to these flood zones to the north.

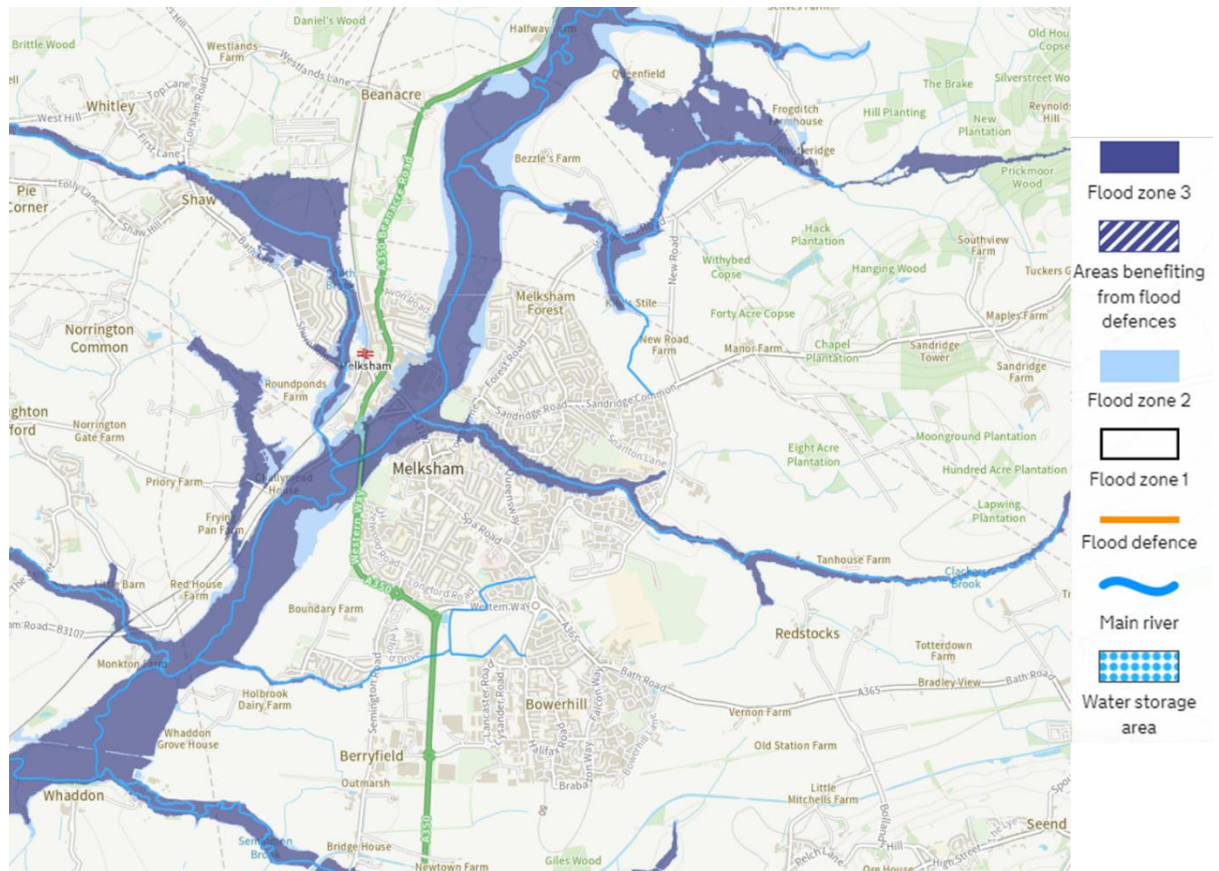


Figure 4.3: Fluvial flood risks within the neighbourhood area

4.12 **Figure 4.4**²² overleaf demonstrates that similar areas are at risk of surface water flooding. In particular, Melksham, Shaw and Whitley are at medium and high risk of surface water flooding - with houses in these settlements being subjected to internal flooding within properties due to surface water (this has occurred multiple times over the last decade). This may be due to drains in streets and paved areas becoming clogged or reaching capacity during heavy rainfall events. Additionally, the area around Woodrow Road in the north of the neighbourhood area is also at high and medium risk of surface water flooding.

²² GOV.UK (2019) 'Learn more about flood risk' can be accessed [here](#).



Figure 4.4: Surface water flood risks within the neighbourhood area

Future baseline

4.13 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the neighbourhood area. In turn it is likely the neighbourhood area will experience an amplified level of risk associated with climate change and a subsequent increase in need for resilience and adaptation measures. New development has the potential to increase flood risk through changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks, and / or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk.

4.14 In terms of climate change contribution, greenhouse gas emissions generated in the neighbourhood area may continue to decrease with the wider adoption of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production, and new technologies. However, increases in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area would likely contribute to increases in the absolute levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and these increases are considered likely with or without the JMNP2.

Key issues

4.15 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to climate change and flood risk:

- Wiltshire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and is committed to making the authority area carbon neutral by 2030.
- The transport sector continues to be a key challenge in terms of reducing emissions. The JMNP2 provides opportunities to guide development towards the most accessible locations in the neighbourhood area and require local infrastructure (including walking and cycling infrastructure) improvements where appropriate. This could include the implementation of EV charging infrastructure.
- Opportunities to influence per capita emissions could be sought through the JMNP2 process, particularly by planning for integrated and connected development, which reduces the need to travel and supports opportunities to travel by more sustainable modes.
- The neighbourhood area is at risk of varying levels of surface water flooding and has areas of land in Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 – following the watercourses that are present. The settlements of Melksham Town, Shaw and Whitley are particularly susceptible to flooding – with internal flooding occurring in Shaw and Whitley due to surface water. Surface water run-off from development can exacerbate the risk of flooding by increasing the run-off from land to water courses.
- Opportunities to enhance the resilience of the neighbourhood area and its residents to the effects of climate change should be sought out in the JMNP2. This can include adaptation strategies, green infrastructure enhancement, flood betterment measures, infrastructure development, and increased renewable energy sources.

Proposed SEA objective

4.16 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.

4.17 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?
- Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and EV infrastructure?
- Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?
- Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?

- Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change?
- Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area?
- Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing runoff where possible?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?

5. Community Wellbeing

Focus of theme

5.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme. The theme focuses on population and age structure, deprivation levels, housing mix and affordability, community assets and infrastructure, and influences on health and wellbeing for residents in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

5.2 **Table 5.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 5.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the community wellbeing SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On	2020
Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance	2019
Planning for Sport Guidance	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy	2019
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

5.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which seek to retain and enhance access to community services and facilities. The NPPF recognises the benefits of having a range of local provision to support community needs. In addition, the NPPF recognises the benefits of creating cohesive communities in safe environments where the fear of crime (and crime itself) does not undermine resident quality of life.
- The NPPF recognises the role of development plans in helping to deliver access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity, therefore contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities. The health benefits of access to nature, green spaces and green infrastructure are further reiterated in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Additional guidance is available through the Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance.

- The 2020 Health Equity in England Report identifies a health gap between less and more deprived areas, which has grown in the last decade. This means an increased amount of people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health with a stalled, or even declining, life expectancy.
- The Planning for Sport Guidance seeks to help the planning system provide formal and informal opportunities for everyone to take part in sport and be physically active, setting out twelve principles.
- Wiltshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a shared strategy which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population, reduce inequalities, and promote the integration of services. The strategy has been developed based upon the evidence of need identified within The Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which provides a summary of the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the people in Wiltshire.
- The JMNP2 will also need to consider the relevant policies that are outlined in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. In particular, this includes:
 - Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy.
 - Core Policy 3: Infrastructure Requirements.
 - Core Policy 34: Additional Employment Land.
 - Core Policy 35: Existing Employment Land.
 - Core Policy 36: Economic Regeneration.
 - Core Policy 38: Retail and Leisure.
 - Core Policy 39: Tourism Development.
 - Core Policy 43: Providing Affordable Homes.
 - Core Policy 44: Rural Exception Sites.
 - Core Policy 45: Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs.
 - Core Policy 46: Meeting the Needs of Wiltshire's Vulnerable and Older People.
 - Core Policy 47: Meeting the Needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
 - Core Policy 48: Supporting Rural Life.
 - Core Policy 49: Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities.
 - Core Policy 51: Landscape.
 - Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure.
 - Core Policy 55: Air Quality.
 - Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.
 - Core Policy 66: Strategic Transport Network; and
 - Core Policy 68: Water Resources.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to enhance community wellbeing by:
 - Enhancing blue/green infrastructure and biodiversity; and

- Promoting sustainable transport, active travel and improving air quality.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Population and age structure

5.4 The JMPN2 area includes two parishes – Melksham Town and Melksham Without. A significant proportion of the population is located within Melksham Town and settlements surrounding Melksham Town, including Whitley, Shaw, Bowerhill and Beanacre.

5.5 According to the City Population website, which uses the 2011 Census data, the data for Melksham²³ indicates the area had a total of 15,229 residents in 2011; this is estimated to have increased to 16,416 in 2020. The estimated population for Melksham Town in 2020, categorised by age group, is shown by **Figure 5.1** below.

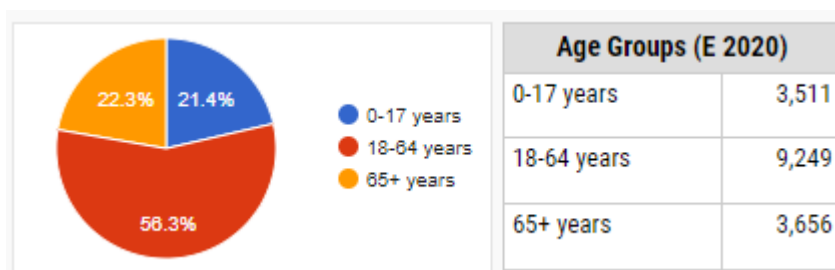


Figure 5.1: Age groups in Melksham²⁴

5.6 The data for Melksham Without²⁵ indicates the area had a total 6,678 residents in 2011; this is estimated to have increased to 7,701 in 2020. The estimated population for Melksham Without in 2020, categorised by age group, is shown by **Figure 5.2** below.

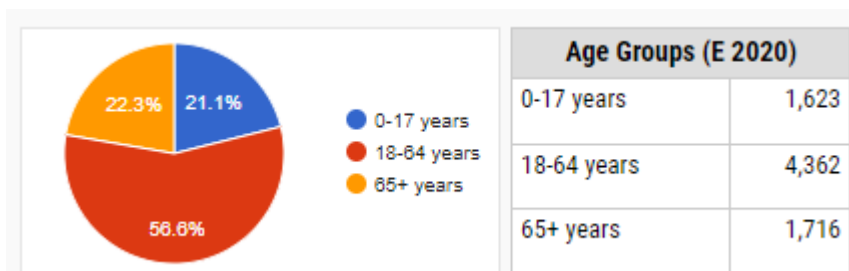


Figure 5.2: Age groups in Melksham Without²⁶

²³ City Population (2021) 'Melksham' can be accessed [here](#).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ City Population (2021) 'Melksham Without' can be accessed [here](#).

²⁶ Ibid.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

5.7 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation and is the combination of seven different domains as described below:

- **Income:** the proportion of the population experiencing a deprivation relating to low income. There are a further two subsets of this measure:
 - **Income deprivation affecting children:** the proportion of children aged 0-15 living in income deprived families; and
 - **Income deprivation affecting older people:** the proportion of all adults aged 60 and above that experience income deprivation.
- **Employment:** the proportion of the working-age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those who want to work but cannot.
- **Education, skills, and training:** the lack of attainment and skills in the population.
- **Health deprivation and disability:** the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.
- **Crime:** the risk of personal and material victimisation at the local level.
- **Barriers to housing and services:** the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, split into ‘geographical barriers’ linked to physical proximity and ‘wider barriers’ linked to access to housing.
- **Living environment:** the quality of the local environment, categorised into ‘indoors living environment’ to measure the quality of housing and ‘outdoors living environment’ to measure indicators like air quality and road traffic accidents.

5.8 Lower super output areas (LSOAs)²⁷ are designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardised geographies intended to be as consistent as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2019, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived.

5.9 In this respect, the neighbourhood area overlaps with 14 LSOAs. **Table 5.2** below indicates which deprivation domain is more prevalent across the LSOAs overlapping the neighbourhood area. Reflecting on this information, clearly ‘barriers to housing and services’ and ‘education, skills and training’ are the main deprivation issues in the area.

²⁷ The Indices of Deprivation Explorer can be accessed [here](#).

Table 5.2: IMD rankings for the neighbourhood area

LSOA	Most deprived deprivation domain
Wiltshire 020A	Barriers to Housing and Services – 3,403 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020B	Education, Skills and Training – 767 (amongst 10% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020C	Education, Skills and Training – 7,513 (amongst 30% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020D	Education, Skills and Training – 7,000 (amongst 30% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 020E	Education, Skills and Training – 13,324 (amongst 50% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021B	Barriers to Housing and Services - 12,484 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021D	Barriers to Housing and Services – 5,037 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021E	Barriers to Housing and Services – 5,694 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 021F	Barriers to Housing and Services – 15,679 (amongst 50% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022A	Education, Skills and Training – 2,272 (amongst 10% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022B	Education, Skills and Training – 5,550 (amongst 20% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022C	Crime – 11,638 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022D	Employment – 11,123 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)
Wiltshire 022E	Education, Skills and Training – 12,525 (amongst 40% most deprived neighbourhoods)

Housing tenure

5.10 As reported by Zoopla²⁸, the average house price in Wiltshire is £317,935 – with flats selling for an average of £158,168, terraced houses for an average of £253,863, semi-detached houses for an average of £296,446 and detached houses for an average of £486,235. Furthermore, according to Zoopla²⁹, the average house price in Melksham is £285,745 – with flats selling for an average of £126,948, terraced houses for an average £239,151, semi-detached houses for an average of £256,131 and detached houses for an average of £428,834. This suggests that the neighbourhood area has lower than average house prices in comparison to the regional trends. However, the affordability of

²⁸ Zoopla (2022) 'House prices in Wiltshire' can be accessed [here](#).

²⁹ Zoopla (2022) 'House prices in Melksham' can be accessed [here](#).

housing for local residents is a key issue as identified by the IMD data, with ‘barriers to housing and services’ linked to the financial affordability of housing.

5.11 **Figure 5.2** below indicates housing tenure in the neighbourhood area. According to 2011 Census data, approximately 72.4% of the neighbourhood area households are owned outright or with a mortgage or loan, with an additional 0.5% under shared ownership. 14.4% of the neighbourhood area households are socially rented, 11.8% are privately rented and 0.9% of households live rent free.

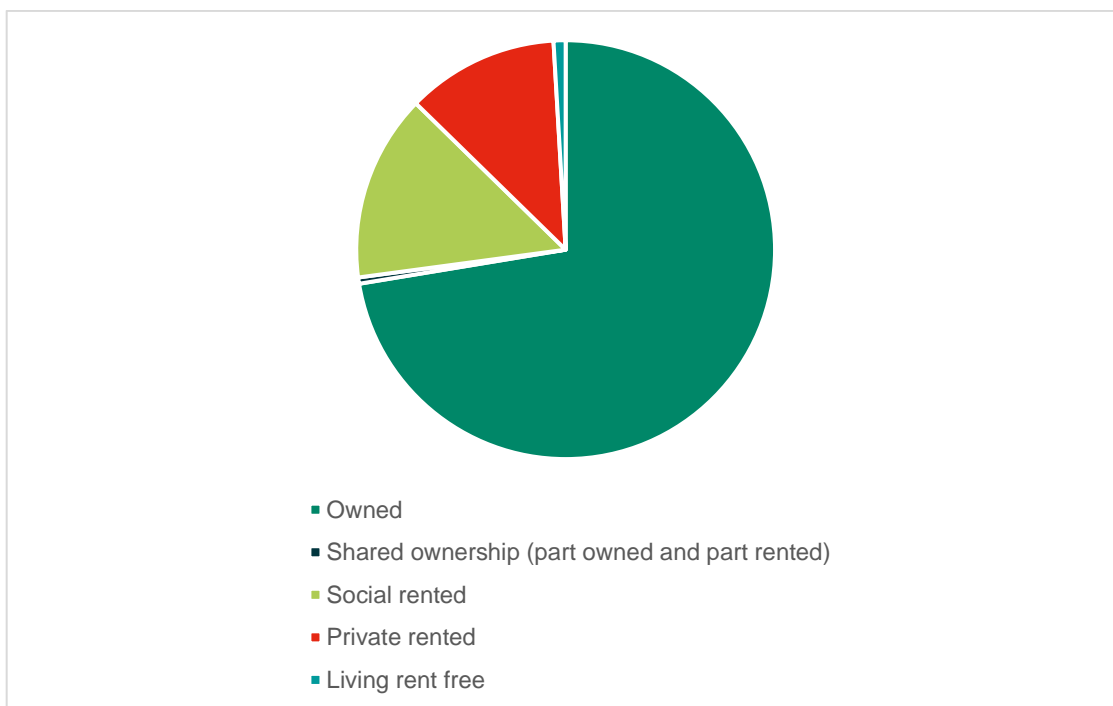


Figure 5.2: Tenure by household composition for the neighbourhood area (based on 2011 Census data)

Community assets and infrastructure

5.12 An overview of the services and facilities within the neighbourhood area is provided below^{30,31}:

- Melksham Town parish area:
 - Community centres like Melksham Town Hall and the Bangladeshi Centre.
 - Supermarkets, including (but not limited to) ASDA Melksham Superstore and Waitrose and Partners Melksham.
 - The Melksham Community Campus (including a leisure centre, library and community meeting rooms).
 - The Post Office.
 - Multiple restaurants, including Casa Restaurant and Bar, Refa Tandoori and the West End Inn.

³⁰ The review of the services, facilities and amenities was conducted via a high-level Google Maps search – focusing on each settlement in the neighbourhood area in turn and making a note of the different features present.

³¹ Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) ‘Community Facilities Evidence Base Report’ can be accessed [here](#).

- Multiple places of worship, including St. Michael's and All Angels' Church and the Queensway Chapel.
- King George V Park.
- Various primary schools and nurseries, including (but not limited to) Forest and Sandridge C of E Primary School and River Mead Nursery.
- Melksham Train Station.
- Allotments.
- Multiple health facilities, including a community hospital, a GP and dental practices.
- Hotels, including the Kings Arms Hotel.
- Small, local businesses.
- The Spencer Sports and Social Club; and
- Facilities for youth groups, such as the Scout Hut and Guide Centre.
- Melksham Without parish area:
 - Multiple village halls, including Bowerhill Village Hall, Shaw Village Hall and Berryfield Village Hall (it is noted a new village hall is being opened in Berryfield).
 - Places of worship, including Whitley Methodist Church.
 - A gym.
 - Independent businesses.
 - Shops like Tesco Express.
 - Primary schools like Bowerhill Primary School.
 - Whitley Golf Club.
 - Melksham Town Football Club and Rugby Club.
 - Nurseries like Rocking Horse Nursery.
 - Boomerang Play Centre.
 - The Melksham Oak Community School.
 - Travelodge Melksham.
 - A gymnastics school.
 - Bowerhill Sports Field.
 - Beanacre Community Park and Play Area.
 - Large industrial states in Bowerhill which include businesses like Screwfix, Melksham Motor Spares and Wiltshire School of Gymnastics.
 - Dick Lovett car showrooms.
 - Pubs, including the Pear Tree Inn, The Pilot and the Golden Fleece; and
 - The Melksham Squadron Air Training Corps (2385).

Green infrastructure networks

5.13 Access to gardens, parks, woodlands, and rivers have played a huge part in helping people through the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost nine in ten adults surveyed by Natural England reported that being in nature makes them feel happy, and nearly three quarters of adults were concerned about biodiversity loss in England³².

5.14 Within the neighbourhood area, green spaces include³³:

- Allotments.
- Whitley Golf Club.
- King George V Park.
- Bowerhill Sports Field.
- Accessible natural green space like Conigre Mead Nature Area and Clackers Brook Corridor.
- Blenheim Park.
- Riverside Walk.
- Forresters Park.
- Churchyards, including Melksham Cemetery, St Andrew's Churchyard and Christ Church Shaw Cemetery.
- Various parks and recreation grounds, like Primrose Play Area, Beanacre Community Park, Skylark Play Area and Shaw Play Area.

5.15 The JMNP2 is looking to designate new local green spaces, and evidence is being prepared to support the justification of these designations. Once finalised, this evidence will be a useful source of reference during the next stages of the SEA process.

5.16 Additionally, a priority of the JMNP1 was to support the restoration of the Wilts and Berks canal, as well as engage with the safeguarding of the future route of the canal. According to the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust website³⁴, the Melksham Link was not originally incorporated into the early canal restoration but is now being planned and two proposals should have been submitted by the time of writing this SEA Scoping Report. The proposed route uses the River Avon that runs through Melksham Town.

Future baseline

5.17 As the population of the neighbourhood area increases and ages, there is likely to be increasing pressure on services within the neighbourhood area. This highlights the need to support the retention of existing facilities in the area, including open green space, which has been increasingly used and valued through the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors are more likely to be appropriately considered and addressed through planned development rather than unplanned development.

³² Natural England (2020) People and Nature survey can be accessed [here](#).

³³ Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2021) 'Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report' can be accessed [here](#).

³⁴ Wilts and Berks Canal Trust (2022) 'Melksham Link: 2006 – Present' can be accessed [here](#).

5.18 The suitability and affordability of housing for local requirements depends on the implementation of appropriate housing policies throughout the neighbourhood area. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of transport and access to infrastructure, or the natural environment.

5.19 The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the way people work and shop. For many people, working from home is likely to continue to form part of a more flexible approach. The effects of increased levels of home working are further discussed under the 'Transportation' SEA theme in **Chapter 9**.

Key issues

5.20 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to community wellbeing:

- There is a large proportion of residents aged 18-64 in the neighbourhood area. The services, facilities, and amenities within the neighbourhood area serve this working population well, and also support the younger and older demographics well. In this way the neighbourhood area supports community vitality and the quality of life of all residents.
- Based on the 2019 IMD data, the neighbourhood area is most deprived in terms of 'barriers to housing and services' and 'education, skills and training', with LSOAs often being within the top 20% most deprived deciles for these sub-domains.
- As the requirements of the working population continue to change, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is likely to be a requirement for adaptable dwellings which can accommodate more flexible working practices.

Proposed SEA objective

5.21 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.

5.22 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing?
- Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?
- Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?
- Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population?
- Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?

- Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?
- Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements?
- Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?
- Minimise fuel poverty?
- Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?

6. Historic Environment

Focus of theme

6.1 This chapter presents the policy context and the baseline summary in relation to the historic environment SEA theme. The theme focuses on designated and non-designated assets, the setting, special qualities, and significance of heritage assets, locally important heritage features, and the historic character of the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

6.2 **Table 6.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 6.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the historic environment SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Model Design Code	2021
The National Design Guide	2019
Historic England: Heritage and Climate Change	2022
Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: The Setting of Heritage Assets	2017
Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	2016
Historic England Advice Note 3: The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans	2015
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

6.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The key principles for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are as follows:
 - The historic environment is a shared resource;
 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment;
 - Understanding the significance of places is vital;

- Important places should be managed to sustain their values;
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent, and consistent; and
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential³⁵.
- The significance of a place is the crucial element that supports the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is the collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, no matter what form the place takes. This means a singular building, an archaeological site, or a larger historic area, such as a whole village or landscape, can be important.
- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, which seek to conserve and enhance historic environment assets in a way that compliments and works with their significance. The NPPF pursues planning policies and decisions that are understanding to local character and history without preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation and change. The NPPF supports the use of area-based character assessments, design guides and codes, and masterplans to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.
- The NPPF indicates proposed plans should ensure the design of streets, parking areas and other transport elements reflect current national guidance including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. Design codes can set out a necessary level of detail in sensitive locations. In the case of the historic environment, they can indicate specific ways to maintain local character.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan and the National Design Guide recognise and reiterate the role of the historic environment in supporting healthy and thriving ecosystems, landscapes, and cultural values. Of note in the 25 Year Environment Plan is ‘Goal 6: Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment’.
- Historic England’s Heritage and Climate Change strategy document details the impacts climate change could have on heritage in the future, and highlights the role of heritage in climate action. The vision of the document is to ensure the role of heritage in the global fight to limit climate change and its impact on people and places by 2040 – working to mitigate, manage risk and adapt.
- Historic England’s Advice Notes provide further guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Of relevance for the JMNP2 is the emphasis on the importance of:
 - Understanding the different types of special architectural and historic interest that underpin designations and the consideration of how settings and / or views contribute to the significance of heritage assets.

³⁵ Historic England (2008) ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment’ can be accessed [here](#).

- Recognising the value of implementing controls through neighbourhood development plans, conservation area appraisals and management plans; and
- Appropriate evidence gathering, including the clear identification of any issues that threaten an area, asset character, or appearance that merit the introduction of management measures.
- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:
 - Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping.
 - Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to safeguard the historic environment by delivering sustainable development and construction methods in the built environment.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Listed buildings

6.4 Listed buildings are nationally designated heritage assets that are protected through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990³⁶. To assess the historic environment, the National Heritage List for England, provided by Historic England³⁷, has been utilised. According to this search engine, there are 225 listed buildings within the neighbourhood area: one Grade I, five Grade II* and 219 Grade II. The location of these assets is shown in **Figure 6.1** at the end of the chapter.

6.5 The Grade I listed building is Beanacre Old Manor – Historic England (HE) list number [1021755](#). The Grade II* listed buildings are as follows:

- Church of St Michael – HE list number [1021707](#).
- Turner memorial in the churchyard about 45 metres south of Lady Chapel of the Church of St Michael – HE list number [1021708](#).
- Woolmore Farmhouse – HE list number [1021762](#).
- Christ Church – HE list number [1194686](#); and
- Beanacre Manor with Dairy – HE list number [1364152](#).

6.6 There are a large number of listed buildings within Melksham, concentrated along King Street, Spa Road, Bank Street, Church Street, Church Walk, Cannon Square and the area around St Michael and All Angels' Church. Within Melksham Without, the listed buildings are mostly concentrated along Beanacre Road (A350) and the Old Road south of Beanacre, and in Whitley – along West Hill, Bath Road, First Lane, Folly Lane, Top Lane and Corsham Road.

³⁶ UK Government (1990) 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act' can be accessed [here](#).

³⁷ Historic England (no date) 'National Heritage List for England – Search the List – Advanced Search' can be accessed [here](#). Select which heritage categories you'd like to view and enter 'Wiltshire' into the 'District/Unitary Authority/Borough' box and then 'Melksham' and 'Melksham Without' into the 'Parish (Civil / Non-civil)' box in turn and press the search button at the bottom of the page.

Conservation areas

- 6.7 Conservation areas are designated because of their special architectural and historic interest. Conservation area appraisals are a tool to demonstrate the area's special interest, explaining the reasons for designation and providing a greater understanding and articulation of its character - mentioned within the 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' advice note by Historic England.
- 6.8 Within the neighbourhood area there is one conservation area – Melksham conservation area, which can be viewed on the Wiltshire online mapping system³⁸. There is no appraisal or plan available for this conservation area

Registered parks and gardens

- 6.9 Historic England's 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England', established in 1983, currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of significance.
- 6.10 The Grade II Spye Park³⁹ is immediately north-east of the neighbourhood area, located within Bromham parish. It is the remains of an early 18th century garden by Stephen Switzer, within a late 18th century pleasure grounds and landscape park. There is evidence of further late 19th century landscaping. There are two large lawns that offer wide views into the surrounding countryside, and three areas of park with a variety of tree species.

Locally important heritage features

- 6.11 It is noted that not all of the neighbourhood area's historic environment features are subject to statutory designations and non-designated features contribute a large part of what people interact with on a day-to-day basis. Although not designated, many buildings and areas are of historic interest and are important to local communities. It is noted the neighbourhood group are preparing a list of important heritage assets to contribute to the evidence base for the emerging JMNP2 which will inform the plan policy. This evidence, once completed, will be an essential source of reference during the next stages of the SEA process.
- 6.12 The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (HER) identifies important and distinctive structures or features that positively contribute to the local sense of place and distinctiveness of the county. Following a high-level review of the HER via the Heritage Gateway⁴⁰, there are 525 documented local records within the neighbourhood area – 99 in Melksham and 426 in Melksham Without, including enclosures, archaeological finds, ditches and banks, Bronze Age barrows and locally important infrastructure. During the subsequent stages of the SEA process, the Wiltshire and Swindon HER shall be explored in further detail to consider the potential impacts associated with the plan proposals on these assets.

Heritage at risk

- 6.13 Since 2008, Historic England has produced an annual Heritage at Risk Register, which highlights historic environment assets that are seen to be 'at

³⁸ Wiltshire Council (2021) 'Wiltshire Core Strategy' can be accessed [here](#).

³⁹ Historic England (2022) 'Spye Park' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁰ Heritage Gateway (2021) 'More Detailed Search' can be accessed [here](#). Open the link, change the tab from 'map' to 'admin location', type 'Melksham' into the administrative location search bar and press the search button at the bottom of the page. Then repeat the process for 'Melksham Without'.

risk'. According to the 2021 Heritage at Risk Register for the South West⁴¹, there is one heritage asset within the neighbourhood area that is considered to be at risk – the Grade II listed Church of St Andrew (HE number: [1286098](#)).

6.14 However, it is important to recognise that Heritage at Risk registers for areas outside of London do not contain information about the status of Grade II listed buildings. As such, it is currently not possible to determine whether any of the Grade II listed buildings within the neighbourhood area are at risk.

Future baseline

6.15 New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets, for example, through inappropriate design and / or layout. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations offer a level of protection to heritage assets and their settings. Additionally, the planning system has in place tools to offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings, reducing the potential impacts of development to some degree.

6.16 It is recognised that planning for development could provide opportunities for positive effects for the historic environment. This may include new management plans for assets 'at risk', an updated evidence base to compliment information and data associated with conservation areas, public realm and access improvements, or opportunities to better reveal the significance of an asset or increase enjoyment of the historic environment.

Key issues

6.17 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to historic environment:

- There is a variety of designated heritage assets within and surrounding the neighbourhood area, including listed buildings, a registered park and garden and Melksham Conservation Area. Development of the JMNP2 provides an opportunity to deliver a spatial strategy that avoids or minimises impacts for the historic environment.
- The JMNP2 provides an opportunity to develop the existing evidence base in relation to the historic environment. It also poses an opportunity to further heritage understanding in the neighbourhood area through exploring the heritage assets in the area.
- There is an identified heritage asset 'at risk' within the neighbourhood area. Any opportunity to restore or support appropriate management plans for the conservation of this asset should be explored.
- It will be important to ensure that future development avoids / minimises impacts upon the historic environment and maximises opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure, to the indirect benefit of heritage settings.

⁴¹ Historic England (2021) 'Heritage at Risk Register 2021 – South West' can be accessed [here](#).

Proposed SEA objective

6.18 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

6.19 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Conserve and enhance buildings, structures, and areas of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?
- Support access to and the interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?
- Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?
- Protect the integrity and the historic setting of key finds of heritage interest as listed in the Wiltshire and Swindon HER?

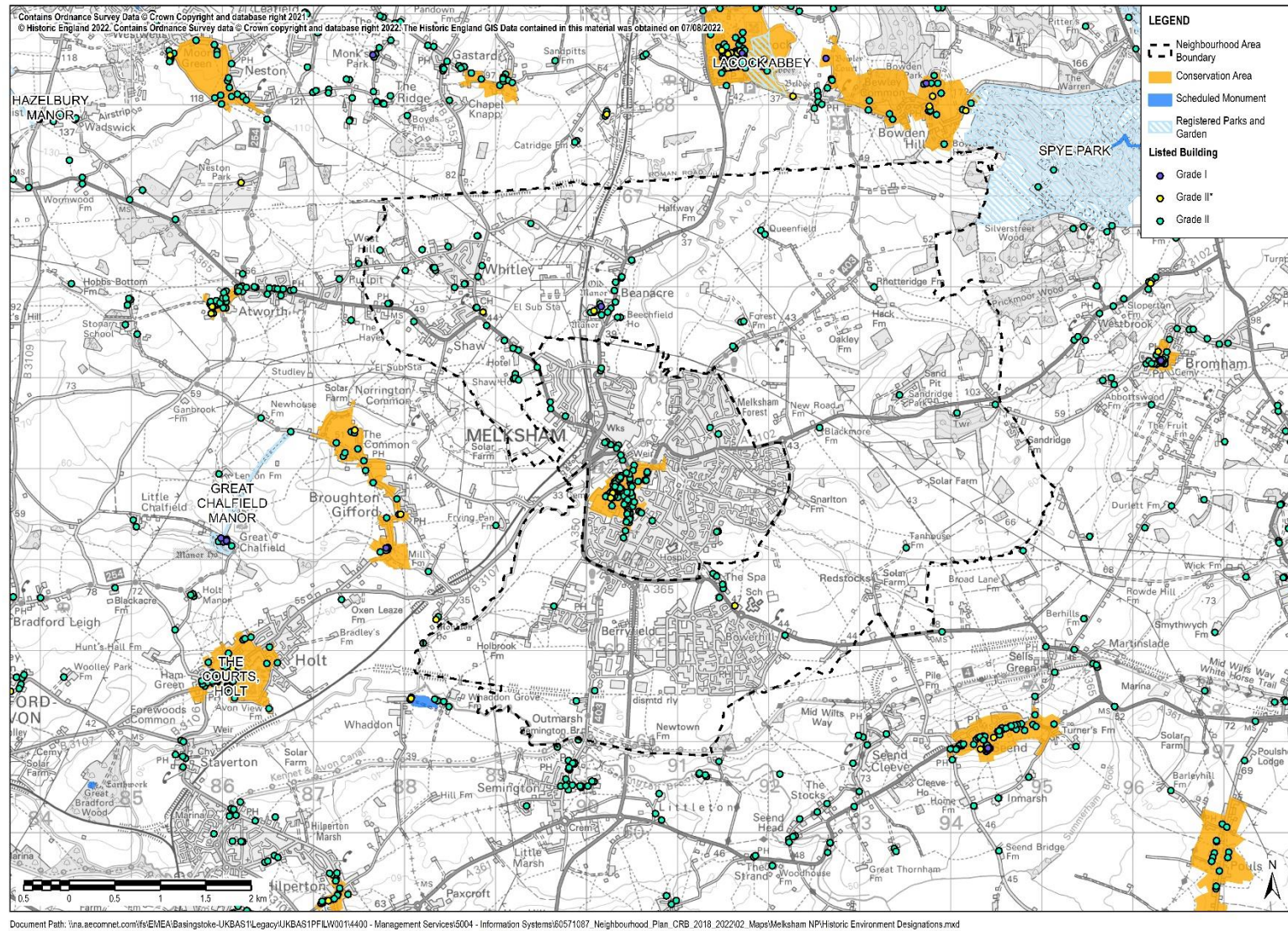


Figure 6.1: Historic environment assets in the neighbourhood area

7. Land, Soil, and Water Resources

Focus of theme

7.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the land, soil, and water resources SEA theme. The theme focuses on quality of agricultural land, extent of mineral resources, and water resources and water quality. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

7.2 **Figure 7.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 7.1: Plans, policies and strategies reviewed in relation to the land, soil, and water resources SEA theme.

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Waste Management Plan for England	2013
Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England	2011
Water for Life	2011
Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England	2009
Wessex Water's Water Resource Management Plan	2019
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy 2006-2026	2009
Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2006-2026	2009

7.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF which pursue the protection of high-quality soil resources and the improvement of the water environment. It recognises the wider benefits of natural capital and the need to consider the long-term implications of climate change and ways in which to build resilience in this respect. The NPPF encourages efficient land use, utilising brownfield land opportunities and land remediation schemes where appropriate and delivering environmental gains.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan discusses measures to improve soil quality, restore and protect peatlands, use water more sustainably, reduce pollution, maximise resource efficiency and minimise environmental

impacts. Of note is ‘Chapter 1: Using and managing land sustainably’, ‘Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste’, ‘Goal 2: Clean and plentiful water’, ‘Goal 5: Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently’ and ‘Goal 8: Minimising waste’.

- Future Water: The Government’s water strategy for England sets out how the water sector will look by 2030 for both people and wildlife. The vision also includes valuing and protecting water resources and delivering water to customers in a fair, affordable, and cost-reflective manner. Water for Life highlights the Government’s vision for a more resilient water sector. It details the measures that will be deployed to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources.
- The Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England policy paper seeks to ensure that all soils in England will be managed sustainably, and degradation threats minimised successfully by 2030. This policy paper also seeks to secure sustainable and resilient water resources in addition to the improvement in waterbody quality. The Waste Management Plan for England identifies measures being taken to move towards a zero-waste economy, which includes national waste plan which seeks to identify measures being taken to move towards a circular economy in which resources are kept in use for longer. To do this, there needs to be a maximisation in the value of resources used and a minimisation in the waste created.
- The neighbourhood area is serviced by Wessex Water. The Wessex Water Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) outlines the issues the water provider faces, like climate change and supply problems, and outlines what measures will be taken to overcome these, including the installation of smart meters.
- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:
 - Core Policy 56: Contaminated Land.
 - Core Policy 68: Water Resources.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to safeguard and enhance land, soil, and water resources through:
 - Tackling flood risk and promoting sustainable water management; and
 - Enhancing blue/green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- The JMNP2 will be required to be in line with the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy 2016-2026 which takes the overall approach to *“manage the availability, extraction and use of primary, secondary and recycled mineral resources whilst seeking to protect the interests of local communities and the wider environment through a series of strategic policies”*.
- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2016-2026 which *“sets out the strategic planning policy framework for waste management over the next 20 years”*.

Current baseline

Soil resources

7.4 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) classifies land into six grades (plus 'non-agricultural land' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the 'best and most versatile' (BMV) land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. In this context, there is a need to avoid loss of higher quality BMV agricultural land.

7.5 As shown in the left-hand image in **Figure 7.1** below, the majority of the neighbourhood area is underlain with Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land, with areas of Grade 4 'Poor' land around Beanacre and to the east of Melksham Town. There are areas of Grade 2 'Very Good' land on the eastern boundary and along the A350 to the north of Melksham Town, as well as an area of Grade 1 'Excellent' land around Berryfield to the south. Melksham Town is classified as 'land predominantly in urban use'⁴².

7.6 **Figure 7.1** also shows the results of Natural England's 'Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment' for the South West region in the right-hand image. It indicates the majority of the undeveloped land within the neighbourhood area has a low likelihood of being BMV land, with areas of moderate likelihood located towards the north, north-east and north-west of the neighbourhood area, and areas of high likelihood around Berryfield to the south and along the A350 to the west. Melksham, Berryfield, Bowerhill, Beanacre and Whitely are classified as 'urban / industrial'⁴³.

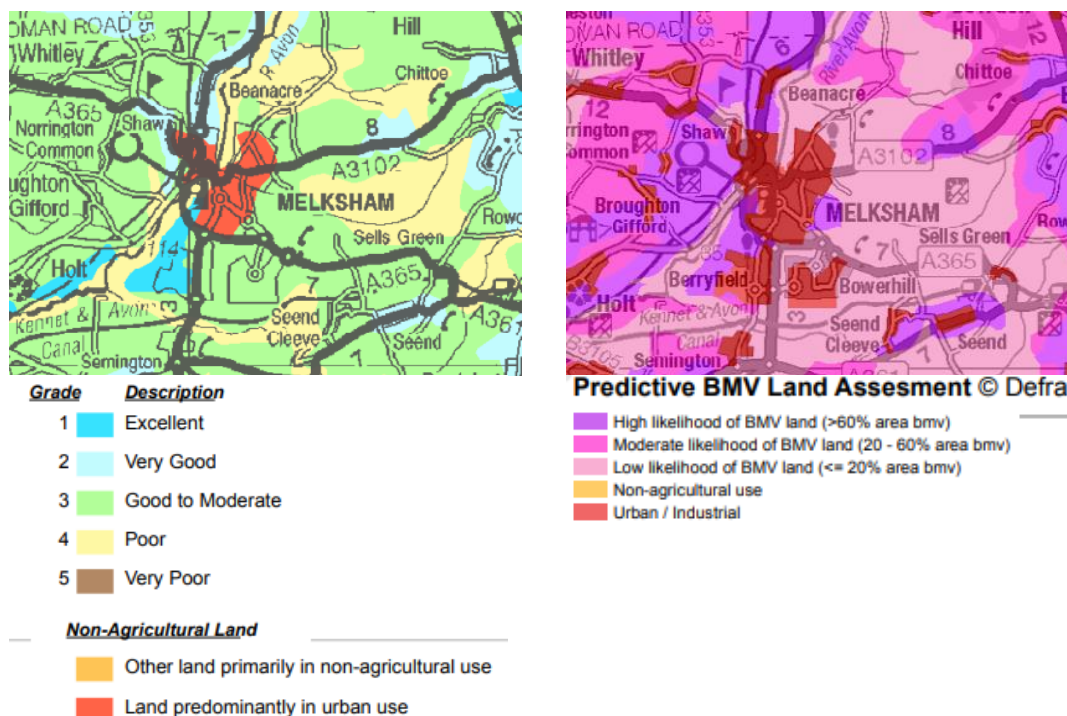


Figure 7.1: ALC and the likelihood of BMV land within the neighbourhood area

⁴² Natural England (2010) 'Agricultural Land Classification Map South West Region' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴³ Natural England (2017) 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map South West Region' can be accessed [here](#).

Mineral resources

- 7.7 Mineral resources are defined as natural concentrations of minerals or bodies of rock that have the potential to be of economic interest in the present or the future due to their inherent properties. As minerals are a non-renewable resource, minerals safeguarding is deployed as the process through which it is ensured that non-minerals development does not needlessly prevent the future extraction of mineral resources⁴⁴.
- 7.8 With regards to mineral resources, the western part of the neighbourhood area appears to be within a mineral resource zone⁴⁵. However, the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework Policies Map does not have the clearest resolution; as such, Wiltshire Council may need to be consulted for development in the neighbourhood area to ensure key areas for minerals are not negatively affected through development.

Water quality

- 7.9 The neighbourhood area is located within the Severn Basin District. Specifically, within the Avon Bristol and Somerset North Streams Management Catchment and the Avon Bristol Rural Operational Catchment. There are several waterbodies within the neighbourhood area (which can be viewed on the Catchment Data Explorer⁴⁶):
- South BK – source to conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body⁴⁷ is a tributary of the River Avon. It was awarded a good ecological status in 2019 but failed the chemical status test for the presence of priority hazardous substances including mercury and its compounds and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE).
 - Avon (Brist) conf R Marden to conf Semington Bk Water Body⁴⁸ is a section of the River Avon and a tributary located in Berryfield. It was awarded a moderate ecological status in 2019 but failed the chemical status test for the presence of priority hazardous substances including mercury and its compounds, perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS) and PBDEs.
 - Forest Brook Water Body⁴⁹ is a tributary of the River Avon. It was awarded a poor ecological status in 2019 and failed the chemical status test for the presence of mercury and its compounds and PBDEs.
 - Clackers Bk – source to conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body⁵⁰ was awarded a poor ecological status in 2019 and failed the chemical status test for the presence of mercury and its compounds and PBDEs.

- 7.10 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) represent areas at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution, identifying rules in relation to the use of fertilisers and manures as well as a requirement to prevent water pollution from farming areas⁵¹. According to the interactive map⁵² the north-western part of the neighbourhood

⁴⁴ UK Government (2014) 'Guidance: Minerals' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁵ Wiltshire Council (2013) 'Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework: Policies Map' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁶ Environment Agency (2022) 'Catchment Data Explorer' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁷ Environment Agency (2022) 'South BK – source to conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁸ Environment Agency (2022) 'Avon (Brist) conf R Marden to conf Semington Bk Water Body' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁹ Environment Agency (2022) 'Forest Brook Water Body' can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁰ Environment Agency (2022) 'Clackers Bk – source to Conf R Avon (Brist) Water Body' can be accessed [here](#).

⁵¹ UK Government (2018) Nitrate vulnerable zones can be accessed [here](#).

⁵² UK Government (2021) Nitrate vulnerable zone designations and appeals 2021 to 2024 can be accessed [here](#).

area (west of the A350 and Beanacre) is within the Surface Water S559 – S bk – source to conf R Avon (Brist) NVZ.

7.11 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes, and springs that are used for public drinking water supply⁵³. There is a small section of the neighbourhood area around Brittle Wood that is within Zone I – Inner Protection Zone and Zone II – Outer Protection Zone.

Future baseline

7.12 New development in the neighbourhood area has the potential to impact areas of BMV agricultural land. In this context there could potentially be opportunities to avoid developing Grade 3a agricultural land by directing development toward areas of Grade 3b land where this is available. Additionally, the regeneration of brownfield sites is encouraged, wherever possible.

7.13 Future development has the potential to affect water quality and availability through increased consumption and pollution, wastewater discharges, water runoff and modification. Wessex Water are likely to maintain adequate water services over the plan period; therefore, it will be important for new development to avoid negative impacts on water quality, and instead contribute to reducing consumption and improving efficiency.

Key issues

7.14 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to land, soil, and water resources:

- The provisional ALC and BMV data indicates the majority of the undeveloped land within the JMNP2 area has a low likelihood of being BMV land. Areas of high likelihood of BMV land are located around Berryfield and along the A350 to the west. Development should therefore minimise the loss of productive agricultural land, prioritising the redevelopment and regeneration of underutilised brownfield land wherever possible.
- There is a mineral resource zone within the western section of the neighbourhood area and as such Wiltshire Council may need to be consulted for development in this part of the neighbourhood area.
- The River Avon is the main waterbody in the JMNP2 area, with some of its tributaries running through the neighbourhood area. According to the Catchment Data Explorer, the River Avon has a varying ecological status, but has a failed chemical status in 2019. As the River Avon is the main waterbody it is more likely to be impacted by development, as Melksham Town is likely to be a focus area for growth during the plan period). It is acknowledged the tributaries of the River Avon may also be impacted by new development in some locations, particularly to the east of Melksham Town. Development should therefore avoid impacts to water quality for the River Avon and its tributaries and within the identified source protection zones and surface water safeguard zone.

⁵³ UK Government (2017) 'Groundwater Protection' can be accessed [here](#).

- Plan making should consider how local decisions affect water supply, such as water accessibility issues, and ensure that appropriate drainage infrastructure is in place to accommodate new development areas.

Proposed SEA objective

7.15 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objectives:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.

7.16 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Promote the use of previously developed land, including the regeneration of underutilised brownfield land?
- Identify and avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?
- Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?
- Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?
- Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development?
- Protect waterbodies from pollution?
- Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?
- Protect SPZs and NVZs in the neighbourhood area?

8. Landscape

Focus of theme

8.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the landscape SEA theme. The theme focuses on nationally protected landscapes, landscape character and quality, and visual amenity in the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

8.2 **Table 8.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 8.1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to the landscape SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Model Design Code	2021
The National Design Guide	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan - Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement	2020
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan - Local Landscape Character Report	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015

8.1 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 should consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing protected landscapes, landscape character, and scenic beauty. The scale and extent of development within these areas should be limited and development within their setting should be mindfully located and designed to avoid/minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
- The NPPF also recognises the role of green infrastructure in landscape settings, as well as the positive contribution that land remediation can have on despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated, and unstable land.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan and National Design Guide outline the same aims as one another, focusing on creating a cleaner, greener country that puts the environment first and celebrates the variety of natural landscapes and habitats present in the UK. Design is focused on creating beautiful,

enduring, and successful places, which respond to local character and provide a network of high quality and green open spaces. Of note is 'Chapter 2: Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' and 'Goal 6: Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment'.

- The National Model Design Code states that all design codes should include a landscape and open space strategy that incorporates the existing natural features and new structural elements. It recognises that landscapes can be major drivers in the design process.
- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:
 - Core Policy 51: Landscape.
 - Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping; and
 - Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment.
- Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to safeguard and enhance the landscape through enhancing blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Nationally protected landscapes

8.2 There are no nationally protected landscapes within the neighbourhood area. However, approximately 3.8km to the west of the neighbourhood area is the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), approximately 2.3km west is the Bristol and Bath Greenbelt, and approximately 4.6km to the east is the North Wessex Downs AONB. Although the proposals in the JMNP2 are unlikely to impact on the setting of these nationally important landscapes due to the distance between them and the JMNP2 area, it will be important for the plan to consider the special qualities of the surrounding landscape and how development could impact local landscape significance. Both AONB management plans should be referred to in order to ensure development works with the landscape effectively^{54,55}. The location of the AONBs in relation to the neighbourhood area is demonstrated in **Figure 8.1** at the end of the chapter.

National character areas

8.3 National Character Areas (NCAs) are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries. This makes them valuable in creating decision-making frameworks for the natural environment.

8.4 The neighbourhood area overlaps with two NCAs – 117 Avon Vales⁵⁶ and 107 Cotswolds⁵⁷. The Avon Vales NCA is characterised by the underlying and

⁵⁴ Cotswolds AONB (2018) 'Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2018-2023' can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁵ North Wessex Downs AONB (2019) 'North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024' can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁶ Natural England (2014) 'NCA Profile: 117 Avon Vales (NE522)' can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁷ Natural England (2013) 'NCA Profile: 107 Cotswolds (NE420)' can be accessed [here](#).

undulating clay vale with a mix of arable and pasture farming landscapes, transport corridors along roads and watercourses, large historic parks and mansions and numerous low ridges with local views over towns and villages. The Cotwolds NCA is characterised by its underlying geology of limestone scarp (influencing drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement), locally quarried limestone that gives a sense of unity across the landscape, large areas of common land, arable farming and a rich history that includes Neolithic barrows, iron-age forts and Roman roads and villas, medieval structures and WW2 airfields.

- 8.5 The NCA profiles will be useful sources of reference during the following stages of the SEA process due to their management principles and detailed landscape sensitivities.

Local landscape, townscape and villagescape character

- 8.6 Landscape, townscape and villagescape character play an important role in understanding the relationship between people and place and identifying recognisable and distinct patterns in the landscape which make one area different from another. Landscape and villagescape character assessments can both help identify the value of landscapes and villagescapes, in terms of visual and amenity value.
- 8.7 According to the Melksham Neighbourhood plan Local Landscape Character report⁵⁸, four local landscape character areas overlap with the neighbourhood area, shown in **Figure 8.1** below and described as follows:
- Limestone lowland around Whitley and Shaw; characterised by a level and gently undulating landscape, extensive views and a distinct pattern of irregular fields enclosed by fragmented hedgerows.
 - Avon clay river floodplain runs from the north through Melksham and then to the southwest and the east; characterised by the River Avon, an intricate network of footpaths along an intimate river corridor and a sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
 - Open clay vale is the dominant landscape type in the neighbourhood area; characterised by a general sense of openness, a flat low-lying landscape with mixed use farmland, and a scattered settlement pattern with a comprehensive footpath network.
 - Wooded Greensand Hills is around Bowden Hill in the neighbourhood area; characterised by steeply rising western slopes that provide dramatic views, wooded parkland around Sandridge Park and a strong sense of tranquillity.

⁵⁸ Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) 'Local Landscape Character Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base Report' can be accessed [here](#).

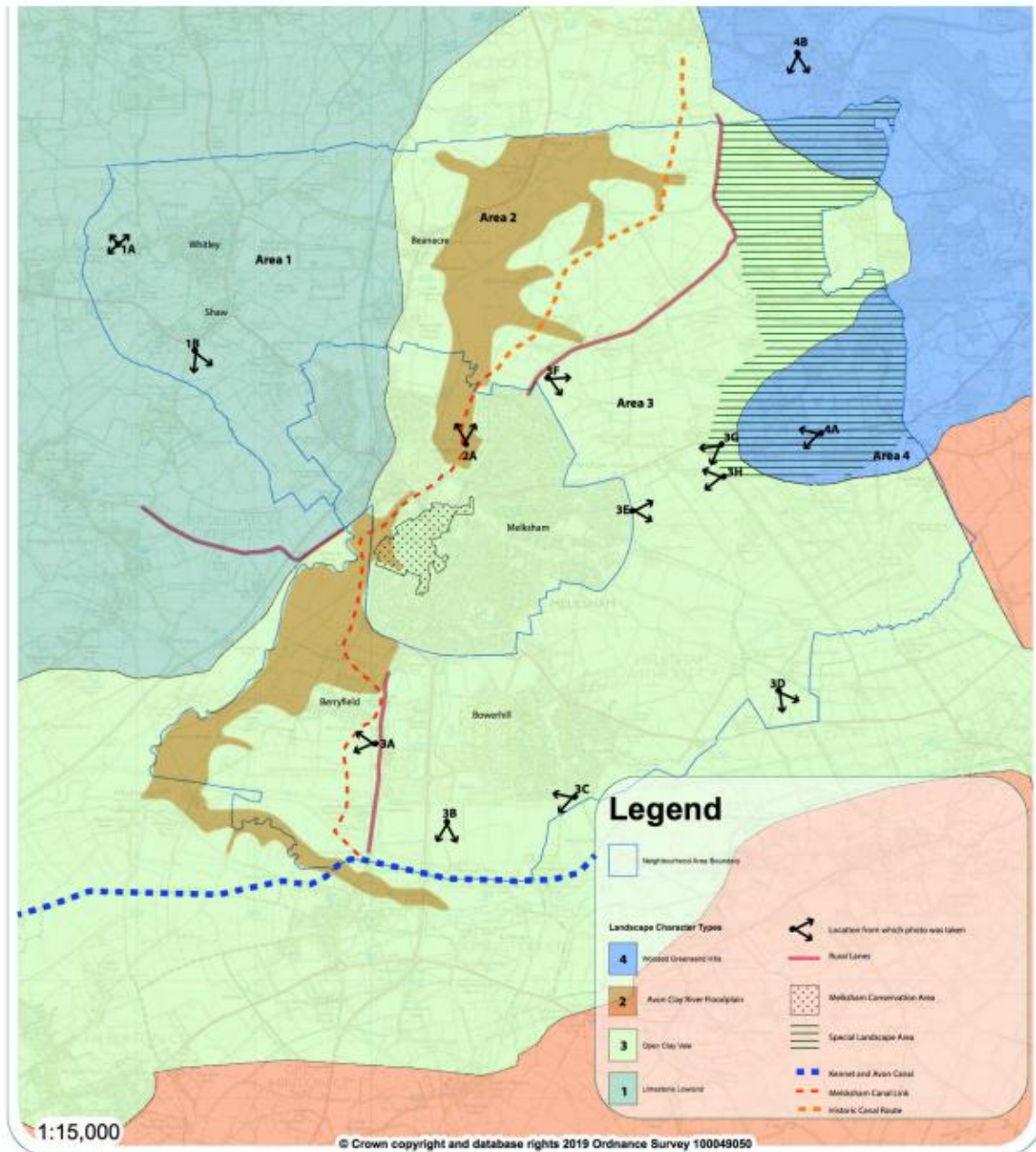


Figure 8.1: Local landscape character areas in the neighbourhood area

8.8 Additionally, according to the Local Landscape Character report⁵⁹, there is an area to the north-east of the neighbourhood area that is designated as a ‘special landscape area’ – an area of high landscape quality. This report will be an essential source of reference during the next stages of the SEA process, along with the Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement, which provides character area assessments for Melksham Town.

8.9 Additional evidence documents have recently been prepared, including a design codes package and a masterplanning package (with a focus on Melksham Town) – these documents will also be essential sources of evidence for the SEA to draw upon and will accompany the JMNP2 at Regulation 14 consultation.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

8.10 It is recognised that the neighbourhood group are completing a landscape gap assessment (with a view to designating gaps within the JMNP2), and, once created, this evidence will be a useful source of reference during the next stages of the SEA and will accompany the JMNP2 at Regulation 14 consultation.

Visual amenity

8.11 It is useful to note that views of and across the neighbourhood area are also an important factor to consider in the planning process, as the scale, height, and mass of development can ultimately impact on important views. Changes like development and landscape change can see these important views and vistas degraded overtime.

Future baseline

8.12 New development has the potential to lead to small, incremental, but cumulative changes in the landscape character and quality within the neighbourhood area. This includes the loss or damage of features and areas with an important visual amenity value. The JMNP2 can help guide development so that it does not negatively impact upon the landscape and visual features which contribute to the distinctive character of the area.

8.13 It should be noted that the planning system has tools in place to offer a degree of protection to the landscape. Therefore, new development will not necessarily result in harm. Furthermore, locally distinctive landscape features, characteristics and special qualities can be protected, managed, and enhanced through appropriate planning policies. It is further recognised that new development that is appropriately designed and landscape led could support the area's intrinsic landscape character and quality. This could include regeneration that improves the setting of the villages, delivering green infrastructure improvements and / or new recreational opportunities and the identification and / or enhanced framing of key views.

Key issues

8.14 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to landscape:

- The JMNP2 overlaps with two NCAs; additionally, there are four different local landscape character areas within the JMNP2 area. These areas contribute to the character and quality of the landscape.
- New development has the potential to lead to incremental change in landscape and villagescape character, and visual amenity.
- The relationship between the settlements and the open countryside is an important part of the character and special qualities of the neighbourhood area. As part of the evidence base, the neighbourhood group are completing a landscape gap assessment that will likely demonstrate this importance. It will be important to maintain the identity of the distinct communities within the JMNP2 area, including (but not limited to) Melksham Town, Bowerhill, Whitley, Shaw and Beanacre.
- It will be important for the SEA process to consider the latest and emerging evidence base documents as these are developed and published.

Proposed SEA objective

8.15 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and villagescape.

8.16 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option / proposal...):

- Protect and enhance the local landscape, townscape and villagescape character, key sensitivities and features, and quality of place?
- Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?
- Protect visual amenity and locally important views in the neighbourhood area?
- Support the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area in accordance with current and emerging evidence base documents?

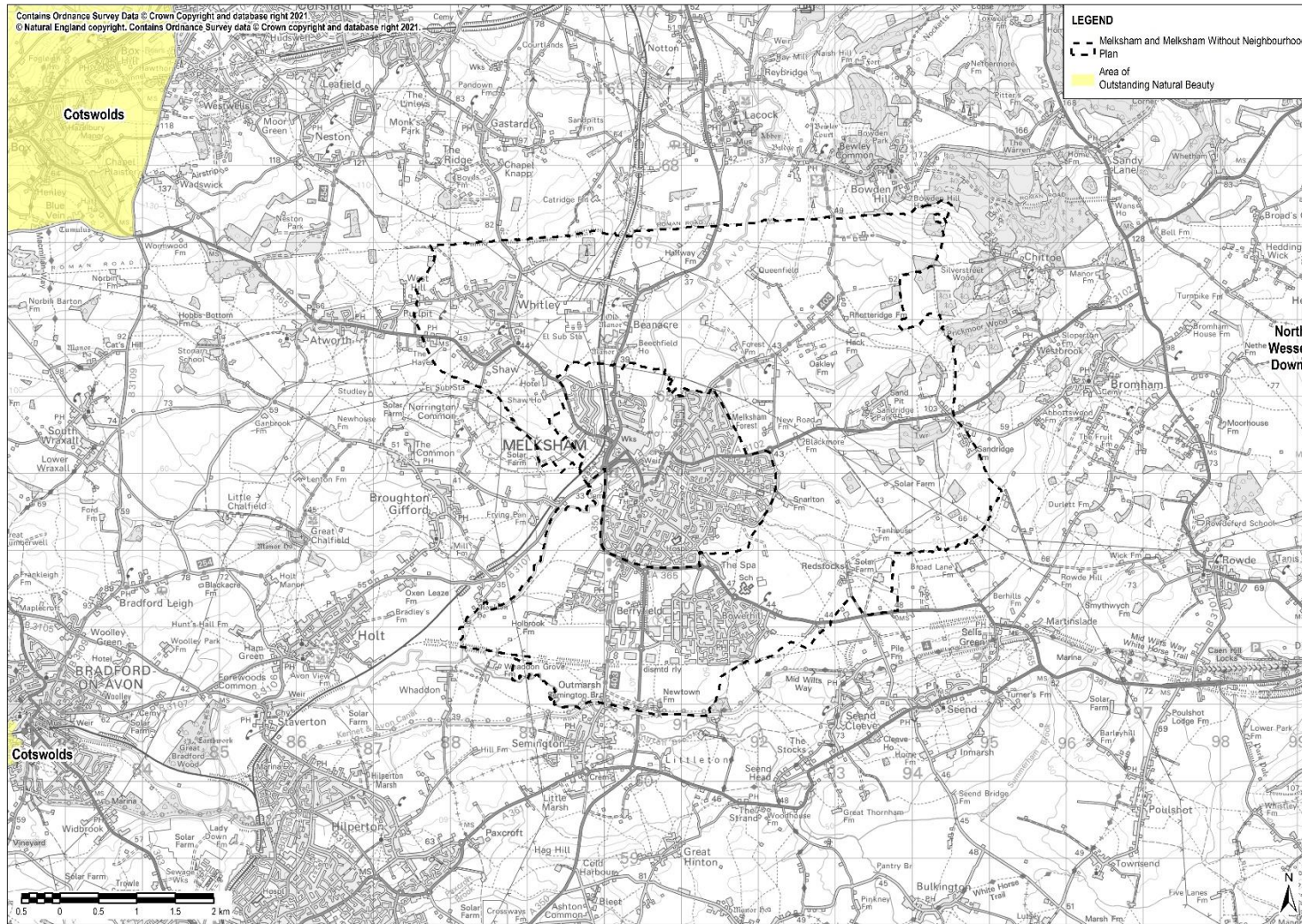


Figure 8.1: AONB locations in relation to the neighbourhood area

9. Transportation

Focus of theme

9.1 This chapter presents the policy context and baseline summary in relation to the transportation SEA theme. The theme focuses on transport infrastructure, transport use, traffic flows and congestion, accessibility, and active travel opportunities within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. This information is used to identify key issues (both constraints and opportunities) before proposing a relevant SEA objective and supporting assessment questions.

Policy context

9.2 **Table 9.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SEA.

Table 9.1: Plans, policies, and strategies reviewed in relation to the transportation SEA theme

Document title	Year of publication
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain	2021
Transport Investment Strategy	2017
Wiltshire Council - Consultation report and next steps	2021
Wiltshire Council - Local Plan Review consultation	2021
Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026	2020
Wiltshire Council - Wiltshire Core Strategy	2015
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 3 2011-2026	2011

9.3 The key messages emerging from the review are summarised below:

- The JMNP2 will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which influence plans and development proposals to ensure they consider transport issues from the earliest stages, address any known issues, and maximise opportunities to increase accessibility to sustainable transport. Larger developments are expected to limit the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is recognised that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural environments.
- Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain sets out how the UK Government will deliver emission reductions and associated benefits in the country; presenting the path to net-zero transport in the UK and the commitments and actions necessary to make progress on this path.
- The Transport Investment Strategy sets out investment priorities to improve the connectivity, effectiveness and reliability of transport network whilst simultaneously reducing impacts on the natural environment. Furthermore, the document places great emphasis on making cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys.

- The Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 seeks the development of a transport system that supports economic growth, choice and opportunity across Wiltshire's communities whilst also being sensitive to the environment and considering climate emissions. The plan identifies the following five challenges in delivering a sustainable transport system for the area:
 - A largely rural county with many historic towns and villages.
 - Relatively high car ownership levels and small, isolated pockets of access deprivation.
 - The changing climate and the prospect of 'peak oil'.
 - Significantly lower funding for transport; and
 - Increasingly elderly population.

To address these challenges, the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan sets out several strategic objects to help achieve the following five goals:

- Support economic growth.
 - Reduce carbon emissions.
 - Contribute to better safety, security, and health.
 - Promote equality of opportunity; and
 - Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment.
- The JMNP2 will also be required to be in general conformity with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This includes:
 - Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport.
 - Core Policy 61: Transport and Development.
 - Core Policy 62: Development Impacts on the Transport Network.
 - Core Policy 63: Transport Strategies; and
 - Core Policy 66: Strategic Transport Network.
 - Due regard is also given to the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, which works to promote sustainable transport and active travel.

Baseline summary

Current baseline

Rail network

9.4 There is a rail station in the neighbourhood area – Melksham train station is operated by Great Western Railway and offers services to Swindon and Westbury⁶⁰, which also stop at Chippenham and Trowbridge. Swindon rail station⁶¹ and Westbury rail station⁶² offer services to a variety of locations including London Paddington, Bristol Temple Meads, Cardiff Central, Weston-super-Mare, Portsmouth Harbour, Paignton and Weymouth. It is also useful to

⁶⁰ GWR (2022) 'Melksham' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶¹ GWR (2022) 'Swindon' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶² GWR (2022) 'Westbury' can be accessed [here](#).

note that there are services from Chippenham and Trowbridge rail stations⁶³⁶⁴ to Bath Spa rail station, which are likely to be used regularly by JMNP2 residents (as Bath is approximately 10km to the west of the neighbourhood area). The service runs weekdays at approximately two hourly intervals, and there are slightly less services on a Sunday. For the service to be more viable for many of the JMNP2 residents, it is desirable to increase the frequency of services, provide better links to the local bus network, and provide an earlier start and later service in each direction.

Bus network

- 9.5 According to the Melksham Without website⁶⁵ and the Bustimes website⁶⁶, there are multiple bus services within the neighbourhood area. FromeBus⁶⁷ operates services 14, 15 and X69 in the neighbourhood area. Services 14 and 15 operate solely within the neighbourhood area, and X69 runs between Melksham and Frome. It is noted services X69 is an infrequent service that does not operate in the evenings or on Sundays.
- 9.6 Faresaver⁶⁸ offers services 68, 69, 271, 272, 273, 555 and X34. Services 68 and 69 provide access to Corsham, Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge, services 271, 272 and 273 provide access to Bath and Devizes, and X34 allows access to Chippenham, Trowbridge and Frome. Service 555 is a school bus service to Corsham. It is noted service X34 does not currently run in the evenings, which reduces its value as a core service for commuting or evening leisure activity. This is similar to services 68 and 69, which do not operate in the evenings or on Sundays. Additionally, services 271, 272 and 273 have very limited evening frequencies in the limiting use for evenings out in Bath.
- 9.7 Swindon's Bus Company runs one service in the neighbourhood area – service X76⁶⁹ provides access to Marlborough, Bath, Cherhill, Calne and Bathford.
- 9.8 The Bustimes website also notes there are two community bus schemes operating in the neighbourhood area – the Seend Shuttle⁷⁰ and the Urchfont Community Bus⁷¹.
- 9.9 All bus services are very limited on Sundays.

Road network and congestion

- 9.10 The main roads within the neighbourhood area are the A350, A3102 and A365 – the A350 allows for access to Chippenham and the M4 to the north and Westbury, Warminster and the A361 to the south. The A3102 allows access to Calne and the A342 to the east and the A365 allows access to the A361 to the south-east, which links Devizes to the A361 and A350.
- 9.11 The key routes that allow entry into Melksham Town are Bath Road (connecting Melksham Town to Whitley and Shaw), the A350 Beanacre Road / Semington bypass, Forest Road, Sandridge Road and the B3107 Bradford Road. The

⁶³ GWR (2022) 'Chippenham' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶⁴ GWR (2022) 'Trowbridge' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶⁵ Melksham Without Parish Council (no date) 'Local Transport' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶⁶ Bustimes (no date) 'Melksham' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶⁷ FromeBus (no date) 'Timetables' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶⁸ Faresaver (2022) 'Timetables' can be accessed [here](#).

⁶⁹ Swindon's Bus Company (2022) 'X76 Marlborough to Bath' can be accessed [here](#).

⁷⁰ Bustimes (no date) 'Seend Shuttle to Melksham' can be accessed [here](#).

⁷¹ Bustimes (no date) 'Urchfont Community Bus to Bath via Devizes' can be accessed [here](#).

Eastern Way and Western Way ring roads pass around the east and south of Melksham Town (connecting to Bowerhill and Berryfield).

- 9.12 Other important roads in the neighbourhood area include the B3353 that connects Melksham Town to Corsham, and Forest Road, Woodrow Road, Westlands Lane and Semington Road, which lead to both Melksham Town and Melksham Without.
- 9.13 The first JMNP⁷² indicates high levels of traffic congestion is a common occurrence on the A350. As such, it has been identified as a key issue for the two parishes of Melksham and Melksham Without.
- 9.14 The first JMNP referred to proposals to upgrade the A350 with a Melksham bypass with appropriate crossing points for cyclists, pedestrians and livestock. This bypass would allow for the A350 to avoid running through Melksham Town, therefore avoiding a critical pinch point, and improve north to south connectivity throughout the Western Gateway. It is noted that the discussion around the bypass in the first JMNP received a number of public comments, but that the bypass is an issue outside of the neighbourhood plan scope.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 9.15 According to the digital map available on the Wiltshire Council website⁷³, there are a multitude of PRoWs within the neighbourhood area. This includes footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.
- 9.16 Additionally, according to the LDWA website, there are a couple of long distance walking paths that cross over the neighbourhood area. This includes the Wilts and Berks Canal Towpath⁷⁴, the North Wiltshire Rivers Route⁷⁵ and the Kennet and Avon Canal Walk⁷⁶.

Future baseline

- 9.17 Given the multiple options for sustainable transport within the neighbourhood area and for travel outside of it (rail network and bus network), it is difficult to predict the volume of private vehicle usage. Although use of sustainable transport should be encouraged, for example by early provision of local bus services in new developments, allowance must be made for potential private vehicle use to avoid further traffic congestion. However, a minor increase could still have an impact on the traffic concerns related to the A350.
- 9.18 As discussed in previous chapters, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and changing working habits, the provision of infrastructure to facilitate working from home may contribute towards transport management, but it is difficult to predict the long term outcome. Whilst negative effects of new development on the transport network are likely to be mitigated in part by new infrastructure, there will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations.

⁷² Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) 'Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026 Referendum Version' can be accessed [here](#).

⁷³ Wiltshire Council (2021) 'Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Explorer' can be accessed [here](#).

⁷⁴ LDWA (2022) 'Wilts and Berks Canal Towpath' can be accessed [here](#).

⁷⁵ LDWA (2022) 'North Wiltshire Rivers Route' can be accessed [here](#).

⁷⁶ LDWA (2022) 'Kennet and Avon Canal Walk' can be accessed [here](#).

Key issues

9.19 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to transportation:

- There is a rail station in the neighbourhood area, offering links to various locations including London, Chippenham, Bristol, Bath and Portsmouth. In this sense, the JMNP2 is well connected. There is also a comprehensive bus network that runs within the neighbourhood area and externally to locations such as Trowbridge, Chippenham, and Frome.
- The JMNP2 area is well served by the road network, however it is noted there are issues with congestion on the A350. There are plans for the Melksham Bypass that will avoid the A350 running through the Melksham Town centre and therefore avoiding a critical pinch point.
- There is an extensive PRow network in the neighbourhood area, and development should seek to connect with and where possible extend this PRow network, thereby maximising pedestrian and cycling opportunities for leisure, working and shopping.
- The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to change travel patterns in the short, medium and (potentially) longer term.

Proposed SEA objective

9.20 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SEA should include the following objective:

SEA theme	SEA objective
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

9.21 Supporting assessment questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Support the objectives within the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes?
- Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?
- Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?
- Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?
- Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?
- Improve road safety?
- Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?

10. Proposed SEA Framework and Methodology

10.1 The proposed SEA objectives, established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise, are brought together to create one framework, the SEA Framework, and are presented in **Table 10.1** below.

Table 10.1: Proposed SEA Framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Air quality	Deliver improvements in air quality in the neighbourhood area.
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and villagescape.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

10.2 The SEA Framework provides a methodology and consistent approach for the appraisal of the emerging JMNP2. The proposed SEA Framework will be used to appraise the options and proposals emerging for the draft plan, and findings will be fed back to the neighbourhood group to inform plan development.

11. Next Steps

Subsequent stages for the SEA process

- 11.1 The next stage will involve exploring reasonable alternatives for the JMNP2. The findings of this work will be fed back to the neighbourhood group so that they might be taken into consideration when finalising the neighbourhood plan. The draft version of the JMNP2 will then be subject to appraisal, and the SEA Environmental Report will be prepared for consultation alongside it.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

- 11.2 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SEA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.
- 11.3 The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. This scoping report has been released to these three statutory consultees.
- 11.4 Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this scoping report, particularly the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SEA Framework.
- 11.5 The consultation period runs from 23rd December 2022 to 3rd February 2023. Comments on the scoping report should be sent to:
- Ryan Putt, AECOM
- Email address: ryan.putt@aecom.com
- 11.6 All comments received on the scoping report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

