

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

Draft Modification Proposal Statement

Prepared in accordance with Regulation 14(a)(v) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in respect of the Modification Proposal to the made Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Development Plan.

October 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. As the joint 'Qualifying Bodies', responsible for the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Development Plan (JMNP), Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council propose to modify the 'made' JMNP ("the Made Plan") of July 2021. To satisfy the regulation requirement to have one single qualifying body for administrative purposes, the lead Council is Melksham Town. However, in every other respect the two Councils will jointly lead and share responsibility for the Plan.
- 1.2. This Statement is published as part of the 'Pre-submission' consultation on the proposed modified Neighbourhood Development Plan – JMNP2 ("the Modified Plan"). Following Regulation 14 consultation, the Modified Plan and this Statement will be finalised and submitted for examination alongside a Basic Conditions Statement and a Consultation Statement, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 1.3. The Town and Parish Councils consider that the proposals represent material and significant modifications to the Made Plan, and are considered so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Made Plan. It is therefore considered that modifications change the nature of the plan and require examination and a referendum. Regulation 14v of the amended 2012 Regulations¹ requires:

"in relation to a modification proposal, a statement setting out whether or not the qualifying body considers that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion".
- 1.4. This Statement serves this purpose and notes the following additional requirements in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)² this document is therefore setting out the background reason to this modification, sets out what the modification is and will set out the reasons as to why the Town Council and Parish Council believe that this modification of the plan is significant enough as to change the nature of the Made Plan.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/regulation/14>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#updating-neighbourhood-plan> Paragraph: 085 Reference ID: 41-085-20180222

2. Background

- 2.1. The Made Plan covers the period up to 2026. The designated neighbourhood area covers the same area as the Town Council area and the Parish Council area which surrounds the town. On 7th July 2021, Wiltshire Council agreed to 'make' the JMNP following a referendum which took place on Thursday 1st July 2021. The results showed 84% of those who voted were in favour of the plan.
- 2.2. The Made Plan – which is termed Neighbourhood Plan 1, or JMNP1 – focuses on a number of key policy areas relevant to the Plan area as a whole, including an allocation of housing for the large village of Shaw and Whitley that contributed to meeting local housing need.
- 2.3. Through the Local Plan Review process, Wiltshire Council were also set to allocate land for development in Melksham, but no final decision had yet been made on the precise scale or location of any allocation at the time of drafting Neighbourhood Plan 1. It was therefore agreed by the qualifying bodies that Neighbourhood Plan 1 should not reach decisions on, or move to allocate, in any other location.
- 2.4. However, Neighbourhood Plan 1 made a commitment to review the Made Plan, once the draft Local Plan Review reached an appropriately advanced stage, in order to determine how the Neighbourhood Plan should respond to strategic housing numbers and allocations in the Local Plan. JMNP1 also made a commitment to pick up on a number of other more detailed issues in a Modified Plan, such as the designation of Local Green Spaces.
- 2.5. The Town and Parish Council has also been mindful of the housing land supply position in Wiltshire and of how this has led to significant unplanned development proposals being granted planning permission if the weight of the relevant development plan is weakened. As a result, it has examined how a first review of the Made Plan may continue to engage paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – essentially to maintain the full weight of its policies for another two years.
- 2.6. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was reconvened in late 2021 by the Parish and Town Council after a brief period following the successful referendum vote role of steering the modifications to Neighbourhood Plan, and in anticipation of the Local Plan Review reaching Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Consultation Stage.
- 2.7. The Wiltshire Local Plan (also referred to here as 'the Plan') has reached what is known as the publication stage ([Regulation 19](#)) of its preparation, and is currently in a consultation period of eight weeks running from Wednesday 27 September to Wednesday 22 November.
- 2.8. The Modified Plan runs over an extended plan period to 2038, which aligns with the Local Plan Review period. The proposed modifications are the result of updated evidence base, including local consultation, which will ensure the Modified Plan retains the primacy of an up to date, plan-led development management framework for decision making that represents the community of the neighbourhood area.

3. The Proposed Modifications

- 3.1. The purpose of the Statement is to explain the reasons why the Town and Parish Council considers the proposed modifications to the Made Plan ‘changes the nature’ of the Plan. It should be read alongside the separate Modified Plan document – JMNP2.
- 3.2. The following table provides a summary of the modifications – comprising the modified and new policies – and explains why the Town and Parish Council considers they change the nature of the plan.
- 3.3. It should also be noted that the Made Plan refers to the Core Strategy, and though this continues to be the current Local Plan until such time that the Local Plan Review has completed all necessary stages, as it has reached the stage of Pre-Submission Consultation, the Modification Plan references the Local Plan as the emerging policy framework for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Table: Modifications Summary

Policy Title	Summary of Modifications	The Change of Nature of the Plan Test
Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction	The policy continues to place the energy hierarchy as a core principle, and has sought to update policy text with the key changes being: The addition of clause (d) which seeks to see that heat and power demands are minimised through energy targets where viable. The addition of clause (g) has also been added existing buildings which may be retrofitted to improve energy efficiency.	The modifications to this policy are simply adding greater detail and clarity, rather than contradicting or changing the principles of the original policy. These modifications are therefore not considered to change the nature of the plan.
Policy 2: Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy	This policy has been updated to expand its scope beyond energy generation schemes that are led by, or benefit the local community.	The modifications to this policy are expanding the scope, of the original policy, but does not contradict or change the principle. These modifications are therefore not considered to change the nature of the plan.
Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 4: Ultra Low Emission Vehicle	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 5: Pre-application Community Engagement	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 6: Housing in Defined Settlements	This policy has been updated to refer to updated evidence base material (Housing Needs Assessment) and draws on specific aspects to set updated policy parameters for housing types, sizes and tenures.	The modifications to this policy are adding greater detail and clarity, drawing on a technical evidence base rather than contradicting or changing the principles of the original policy. These modifications are

		therefore not considered to change the nature of the plan.
Policy 7.1: Land at Cooper Tires	This is a new policy. It allocates a key brownfield site in the town for comprehensive and exemplary mixed-use conservation and development.	As this policy is allocating land for a mixed-use development, it introduces a change to the nature of the plan.
Policy 7.2: Land at the Former Melksham Library Site	This is a new policy. It allocates a brownfield site in the town for residential redevelopment to meet local housing needs to accessible and affordable housing for older and/or disabled people.	As this is a new policy that is allocating land for a residential development, it introduces a change to the nature of the plan.
Policy 7.3: Land at Whitley Farm, Whitley	This is a new policy. It allocates a farm site for residential development in Melksham Without. It contributes to meeting housing targets set by Wiltshire Council through for the next Local plan period up to 2038 for the large villages of Shaw and Whitley.	As this is a new policy that is allocating land for a residential development, it introduces a change to the nature of the plan.
Policy 7.4: Land at Middle Farm Plot A	This is not a new policy. However, it has been updated and does link to a new policy which allocates land to the east (Plot B). It contributes to meeting housing targets set by Wiltshire Council through for the next Local plan period up to 2038 for the large villages of Shaw and Whitley.	Whilst the principle for development in this location is already established in the Made Plan, the policy is linked to an extended allocation to the east – Plot B (see below). It therefore introduces a change to the nature of the plan.
Policy 7.5: Land at Middle Farm Plot B	This is a new policy. It allocates the site to the east of Plot A. It contributes to meeting housing targets set by Wiltshire Council through for the next Local plan period up to 2038 for the large villages of Shaw and Whitley.	As this is a new policy that is allocating land for a residential development, it introduces a change to the nature of the plan.
Policy 8: Infrastructure Phasing and Priorities	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 9: Town Centre	This policy has been updated to refer to updated evidence base material (Town Centre Master Plan Report 2023) and introduces a new clause (a) that references that document and the priority aims set out by it. A final paragraph has also been added and it references an updated map figure (10).	The modifications to the original policy are not significant and it is therefore considered that they do not change the nature of the plan in respect to this modification.
Policy 10: Employment	This policy has been updated slightly to remove the final sentence of the first paragraph.	The modifications to the original policy are not significant and it is therefore considered that they do not change the

		nature of the plan in respect to this modification.
Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 12: Green Infrastructure	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 13: Biodiversity	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 14: Open Spaces	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 15: Community Facilities	This policy has not been updated.	N/A
Policy 16: Local Green Spaces	This is a new policy. Areas of green space that are considered to meet the criteria for Local Green Space Designation are identified.	As this policy is designating land as Local Green Space, the policy has the potential to change the nature of the Plan.
Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows	This policy has been slightly modified. A sentence has been added to the final paragraph to reflect best practice and guidance updated for tree canopy coverage targets.	The modifications to the original policy are not significant and it is therefore considered that they do not change the nature of the plan in respect to this modification.
Policy 18: Landscape Character	This policy has been slightly updated in that it no longer refers to figure 7 as in the last sentence of the Made Plan.	The modifications to the original policy are not significant and it is therefore considered that they do not change the nature of the plan in respect to this modification.
Policy 19: Green Wedges	This is a new policy. It identifies areas of countryside where any development should not lead to coalescence of separate settlements.	This is a significant policy addition as this policy is identifying areas of land as 'Green Wedges' that will serve a policy purpose of preventing coalescence between settlements. In light of this, the policy has the potential to change the nature of the Plan.
Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design	This is an updated policy which links to a major update to the evidence base which has been produced as part of the Modified Plan process - the Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes (2023). The modification text is within the second paragraph of the policy which now references the Code above rather than a Rapid Community Character and Distinctiveness Statement.	The modifications are not considered so significant to change the nature of the plan in respect of this modification specifically.
Policy 21: Local	This is an updated policy. It now references non-designated heritage	The modifications to the original policy are not significant and it is therefore

	assets which have been identified through the Plan Modification preparation process.	considered do not change the nature of the plan in respect to this modification.
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4. Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.1. Wiltshire Council considered that, in relation to the modifications, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will be required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). A Draft SEA and Scoping Report therefore accompanies the Modified Plan and this Statement.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The analysis set out in Table A indicates that a significant number of modified or new policies have the potential to change the nature of the Made Plan in terms of key spatial or design principles. Whilst the modifications are in conformity with the spirit and stated intentions of the original principles of the Plan and in some cases, this is not so substantial nor so significant to warrant consideration as a change to the nature of the Plan. Overall, the modifications are considered to change the nature of the Plan.
- 5.2. As a result, the Town and Parish Council consider that the modifications are material and significant, and therefore change the nature of the Plan.
- 5.3. In summary the Modified Plan proposes the modification of policies in the Made Plan and the addition of new policies. The Plan period now runs to 2038 to align with the Local Plan Review. The proposed modifications will ensure the Modified Plan retains the primacy of an up to date, plan-led development management framework for decision making in the neighbourhood area. The modifications are material, beneficial and change the nature of the Made Plan.