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Wiltshire Council



Melksham Bypass

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Planning Strategy

Wiltshire Council

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Executive Summary

Wiltshire Council has promoted the A350 Melksham Bypass scheme through the Department for Transport's Large Local Majors fund. Funding was received from Department for Transport to develop a Large Local Major improvement scheme for the A350 at Melksham.

The current objective is to identify and assess options for a potential bypass of Melksham, which would divert current through-traffic using the A350 away from the existing route through Beanacre and Melksham.

The A350 is one of the most important routes within Wiltshire connecting the M4 to the north with the A303 and beyond to the south coast, linking several principal towns. It is one of the busiest major roads in the county, with typical daily traffic volumes up to 35,000 vehicles per day and heavy goods vehicles accounting for around 8% of all vehicles. It has been a longstanding priority for Wiltshire Council to improve north-south connectivity through the county via the A350. This reflects the significant role the A350 corridor has in supporting economic activity and growth.

The route suffers from slow moving traffic and variability in traffic conditions due to a combination of speed limits, capacity constraints and high traffic volumes so the network is sensitive to disruption and incidents. Journey time delays and poor reliability affect local residents and businesses, as well as strategic, longer distance traffic. Increased population within the corridor will lead to the existing situation becoming worse. Without any improvement to the A350 there would be increased congestion, rat-running on minor roads and increased collisions.

This Planning Strategy sets out the approach and actions required to progress Melksham Bypass ('the Scheme') through the planning system and to obtain planning permission for the future development of the Scheme. The strategy has been developed from a review of key legislation and relevant planning policy, a desk-based environmental appraisal of the area, the consideration of alternative route options, ongoing design development of a potential highway alignment, the role of consultation and engagement, and the requirements of the planning application submission process. The recommendations include information about the assessments, reports, plans and drawings and other supporting material that are likely to be required to submit with the future planning application for the Scheme. Details of the post-submission stage are also provided, describing the tasks involved in progressing and determining the application, the Compulsory Purchase Order process, if required, and the discharge of planning conditions.

The Planning Strategy is intended as a 'live' document, to be reviewed and updated regularly to align with the ongoing Scheme development process.



1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the document

This document presents a recommended strategy for obtaining planning permission for the future development of the Melksham Bypass ('the Scheme'). The strategy has been developed from a review of key legislation and planning policy with relevance to the Scheme, a desk-based environmental appraisal of the area, the consideration of alternative route options, ongoing design development of a potential highway alignment, the role of consultation and engagement, and the requirements of the planning application process. The recommendations include information about the assessments, reports, plans and drawings and other supporting material that are likely to be required to submit with any future planning application for the Scheme.

The Planning Strategy will be a 'live' document, to be reviewed and updated regularly to align with the ongoing Scheme development process.

1.2. Scheme context

Wiltshire Council has been awarded approximately £1.33 million in funding to prepare an Outline Business Case (OBC) for the delivery of a bypass around Melksham, primarily in order to reduce traffic pressure on the A350, reduce journey times and delays and improve journey reliability on the A350 through Melksham and Beanacre.

The A350 is a key north-south route between the M4 corridor to the north and the South Coast but is not part of the Strategic Road Network managed by Highways England. The A350 is one of the most important routes within Wiltshire connecting the M4 with the A303 and beyond to the Dorset coast, linking several principal towns. It passes around the settlements of Chippenham and Trowbridge via the town of Melksham and neighbouring village of Beanacre, and on to Westbury and Warminster. It is one of the busiest major roads in the county with typical daily traffic volumes up to 35,000 vehicles per day and heavy goods vehicles accounting for around 8% of all vehicles. It has been a longstanding priority for Wiltshire Council to improve north-south connectivity through the county via the A350, which reflects the significant role the A350 corridor has in supporting economic activity and growth.

The route suffers from slow moving traffic and variability in traffic conditions due to a combinations of speed limits, capacity constraints and high traffic volumes so the network is sensitive to disruption and incidents, journey time delays and poor reliability which affects local residents and businesses.

The section of the A350 through Melksham has been identified as a key constraint on the route, lying at the heart of the A350 corridor between the principal settlements of Chippenham and Trowbridge. It includes 30mph sections through residential areas of Beanacre and northern Melksham and carries a high proportion of heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic. The route suffers from frequent peak period congestion through Melksham, including at several busy junctions. These conditions result in a number of associated adverse impacts on local communities, including severance, noise disturbance and accidents. Melksham has seen rapid development in recent years and is expected to be required to accommodate further housing to 2036 through the ongoing Wiltshire Local Plan Review. This further heightens the challenges currently experienced.

The emerging Scheme is for a new road alignment for the A350 around Melksham, bypassing the village of Beanacre. Route options to the east and west of the town are also being considered.

1.3. Constraints and issues

Wiltshire Council acknowledges that Melksham is well served by the A350 primary route which provides a direct link to Chippenham (and the M4 at Junction 17) and Trowbridge. Other key routes provide access to Bath (A365), Calne (A3102), Devizes (A365) and Bradford on Avon (B3107).

Current constraints/local concerns regarding the A350 include:

- Confluence of A350 and other radial routes (A365, A3102 and B3107) causes significant peak hour congestion and delays, particularly in the central section of the A350 through the town.
- Future development growth may increase pressure on the A350 through Melksham and at congestion hot spots such as Farmers Roundabout. This in turn may lead to further rat running through residential and rural roads.

Opportunities for improving the A350 include:

- Further development and delivery of an A350 Melksham bypass could relieve peak time congestion and delays.

- Bypassing Melksham could also reduce severance between the town centre and areas adjacent to the A350 (including the rail station and recent supermarket developments), create an opportunity to re-design the existing A350 corridor through the town, and support efforts to regenerate the town centre.

1.4. Transport Objectives

Wiltshire Council's transport objectives for the A350 Melksham Bypass scheme are as follows:

- Reduce journey times and delays and improve journey reliability on the A350 through Melksham and Beanacre, improving local and regional north-south connectivity, and supporting future housing and employment growth in the A350 corridor.
- Reduce journey times and delays on the A350 and improve journey reliability on the following routes through Melksham and Beanacre:
 - A350 South – A3102
 - A365 West – A365 East
 - A350 South – A365 West
- Provide enhanced opportunities for walking and cycling between Melksham town centre and the rail station/Bath Road, and along the existing A350 corridor within Melksham and Beanacre, which will help reduce the impact of transport on the environment and support local economic activity.
- Reduce personal injury accident rates and severity for the A350 and Melksham as a whole, to make the corridor safer and more resilient.
- Reduce the volume of traffic, including HGV's passing along the current A350 route in northern Melksham and Beanacre to reduce severance, whilst avoiding negative impacts on other existing or potential residential areas.

1.5. Structure of this document

This document has five subsequent chapters, which broadly follow the sequence of the planning process from policy identification to scheme implementation. The scope of the chapters is summarised below:

- Planning and environmental context - provides an overview of key legislation and considerations for the Scheme derived from relevant planning policy and includes a high-level environmental review that informs the scope of appraisal and assessment work needed to support the planning application. Legislation relating to the Environmental Impact Assessment process is summarised in this section.
- Safeguarding the preferred route corridor – describes the aims of safeguarding the corridor, the current policy position and the evidence base required for securing the corridor as part of the Local Plan Review.
- Pre-application stage – outlines the activities that will need to be completed prior to submitting the planning application for the Scheme. This includes environmental assessment work, design evolution activities, public consultation and engagement, and design refinement, focusing on the activities that will influence the finalisation of the Scheme for which the planning application will be made.
- Planning application submission – sets out the documentation likely to be required to accompany the planning application, encompassing plans, drawings and reports that bring together the work undertaken in the pre-application and design refinement stages.
- Post-submission stage – indicates the processes involved both in determining the planning application and once a decision notice has been issued. Includes an overview of the activities that are normally required for Scheme implementation to commence once planning permission has been secured, including the discharge of planning conditions.
- Other environmental consents – presents examples of the environmental consenting that is likely to be required from key statutory agencies, such as protected species licensing from Natural England, Flood Risk Activity Permit and waste management related consents from the Environment Agency, and Ordinary Watercourse Consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

2. Planning and Environmental Context

2.1. Overview

The planning and environmental context is derived from a review of relevant national and local policies to identify any potential risks, opportunities and environmental factors to be considered as part of the design development and assessment process. The information is used to inform the identification of baseline information requirements and, in turn, the scope of appraisal and assessment work needed to support the planning application.

2.2. Constraints Review

Developing an understanding of the environmental context for the Scheme has commenced with a review of various web-based resources including online digital environmental datasets; Proposals Maps and Key Diagrams; Wiltshire Council's online planning applications database and mapping system; and Wiltshire Council's online public rights of way mapping. The details have been collated and plotted on a dedicated WebGIS platform, enabling the Project Team to view and analyse the long-list and short-list route options in the context of existing environmental and planning constraints.

A detailed review of the built and environmental context is presented within the Option Assessment Report (OAR), issued in May 2021 and is available on project webpage (<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass>), with key elements provided here for ease of reference:

Built environment

In terms of built environment features, the most significant constraints include:

- The existing A350 passes through the settlements of Beanacre and Melksham:
 - At Beanacre there are residential properties on both sides of the road, including some with frontage directly on to the road.
 - In the northern section through Melksham (between Leekes and Bath Road), the road passes through another residential area and is hemmed in by frontage development at various points.
 - There are several key junctions along the existing A350 route which connect the surrounding road network and provide access to adjacent land uses. These junctions provide a general constraint to the overall operation of the route and the scope for enhancement.
- There are several other smaller village settlements surrounding Melksham, including: Whitley and Shaw (north-west); Berryfield and Semington (south); and Seend (south east). There are clusters of listed buildings associated with these older settlements. Listed buildings and older properties also tend to extend along the radial routes as they enter Melksham.
- The TransWilts (Chippenham-Westbury) rail line runs parallel to the A350 to the west of Beanacre and presents a significant physical barrier to the west of the town. The line is single track, and this in itself presents a constraint to increasing the frequencies of rail services operating via Melksham.
- Melksham electricity sub-station is located to the west of Beanacre. There is a network of power lines to the western side of the town but also, to a lesser extent, to the east.
- There are two large solar farms – one to the west of Melksham and one to the east.

New development

There are five significant planning commitments on the south and eastern sides of Melksham, four of which are residential (Figure 2-6). These developments are at various stages of delivery:

- Land east of Semington Road / west of A350: 150 dwellings.
- Land south of A365 Western Way / north of Bowerhill: 235 dwellings.
- Land east of Spa Road / south of Eastern Way (part of Core Strategy): 450 dwellings (plus extension to Eastern Way between Thyme Road and Spa Road).
- Land north of A3102 Sandridge Road: 100 dwellings.
- Melksham Health and Wellbeing Centre (southeast of Eastern Way): integrated sports campus including provision of new football and rugby facilities, changing rooms, clubhouse and football stadium, together with car parking and a new access road and junction.

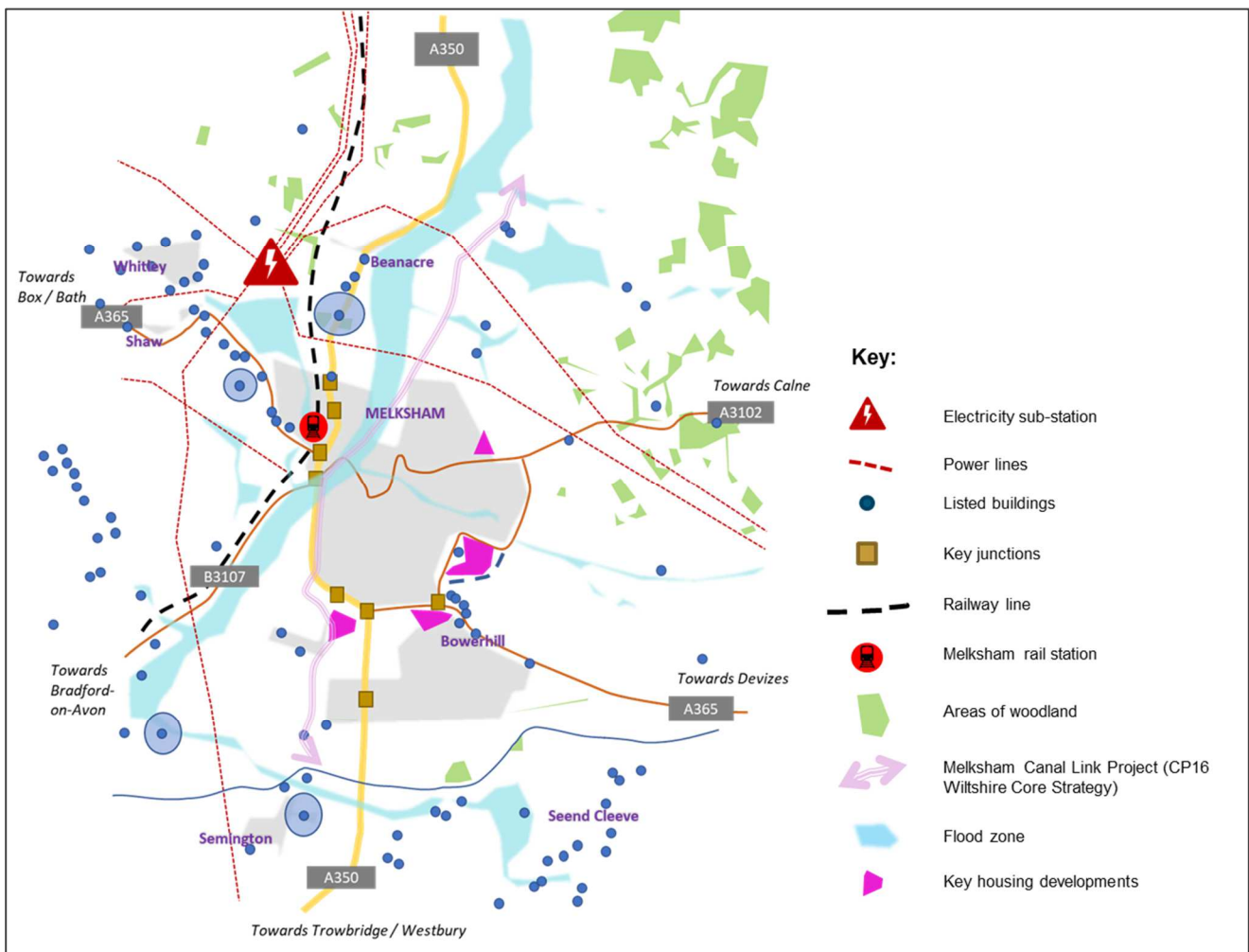
As outlined above, Wiltshire Council is currently undertaking a Local Plan Review, and this is likely to result in the identification of additional sites to be allocated within Melksham up to 2036. At the current stage, no specific sites have been proposed.

Natural environment

Melksham is located within a largely rural setting. Some of the key environmental constraints include:

- The River Avon floodplain that bisects Melksham on a north-south axis. The river is bridged by the A350 immediately south of Farmers Roundabout. The floodplain forms a significant barrier to the east of the A350 on the north side of Melksham and to the west of the A350 on the south side of the town.
- A second area of floodplain lies to the north-west of Melksham, including land south of the electricity sub-station, and the corridor of land to the west of the rail line as it passes through Melksham.
- There are scattered areas of woodland to the east of the town. A small number of these are designated as priority habitats.
- The Kennet and Avon Canal runs east-west to the south of Melksham. An aqueduct carries the canal over the A350. The canal offers recreational use as well as habitat to wildlife.

Figure 2-1 - Key physical and environmental constraints in the Melksham area



An overview of the constraints mapping confirms that the emerging route option does not pass through national or European protected sites, and there are no current site allocations or other planning policy designations that would impact the route options.

The desk-based review will inform the identification of what additional review, survey and analysis is required to gather a fuller picture of environmental baseline conditions, and this baseline appreciation will become more detailed as the project progresses.

2.3. Consenting Route

This section provides a review of the various consenting regimes to determine the correct approach for the Scheme, with consideration given to the Planning Act 2008 (intended for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects), the Highways Act 1980 (in terms of defining the statutory powers afforded to local highway authorities) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (for defining 'development' and the requirement for planning permission). The section is followed by a review of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be required for the Scheme.

Planning Act 2008

Given the nature, scale and likely impacts of the proposed development, it is sensible to consider whether the Scheme would meet the criteria for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), with reference to Section 22 of the Planning Act 2008, as amended by Article 3 of the Highway and Railway (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) Order 2013 (as amended by the 2015 Act).

2) Construction of a highway is within this subsection only if—

(a) the highway will (when constructed) be wholly in England,

(b) the Secretary of State will be the highway authority for the highway, and

(c) the area of development is greater than the relevant limit set out in subsection (4).

(4) For the purposes of subsections (2)(c) and (3)(c) the relevant limit —

(b) in relation to the construction or alteration of a highway, other than a motorway, where the speed limit for any class of vehicle is expected to be 50 miles per hour or greater, is 12.5 hectares.

The Scheme would involve the construction of a new highway outside the existing highway boundary of the A350, which is located wholly in England. However, the highway authority is Wiltshire Council and not the Secretary of State or strategic highways company (Highways England). For this reason, the Scheme does not meet the NSIP criteria, and the preparation and submission of a Development Consent Order application will not be required.

Highways Act 1980

Under the Highways Act 1980, Part V, section 62 (2) and (3), highway authorities and other persons are given powers to carry out any work (including the provision of equipment) for the improvement of the highway. Under Part V, 62 (3) this includes the following works:

(a) the division of carriageways, provision of roundabouts and variation of the relative widths of carriageways and footways;

(b) the construction of cycle tracks;

(c) the provision of subways, refuges, pillars, walls, barriers, rails, fences or posts for the use or protection of persons using a highway;

(d) the construction and reconstruction of bridges and alteration of level of highways;

(e) the planting of trees, shrubs and other vegetation and laying out of grass verges;

(f) the provision, maintenance, alteration, improvement or other dealing with cattle-grids, by-passes, gates and other works for use in connection with cattle-grids;

(ff) the construction, maintenance and removal of road humps;

(fg) the construction and removal of such traffic calming works as may be specially authorised by the Secretary of State under section 90G below or prescribed by regulations made by him under section 90H below;]

(g) the execution of works for the purpose of draining a highway or of otherwise preventing surface water from flowing on to it; and

(h) the provision of barriers or other works for the purpose of affording to a highway protection against hazards of nature.

Under the Highways Act 1980, Part XIV, section 282, highway authorities have the power to execute works for mitigating adverse effects of constructing or improving the highway on the highway itself, highways land or land acquired under section 246 of the Act for mitigating effects. This includes under Part XIV, section 282 (2) the planting of trees, shrubs or plants and the laying of any area as grassland.

However, given the Scheme comprises the construction of a new highway and does not involve the maintenance or improvement of an *existing* highway, it is necessary to consider whether the Scheme would require planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Section 57 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the 'TCPA 1990') directs that all operations or works falling within the statutory definition of 'development' require planning permission. 'Development' includes both operational development where some physical change to the land occurs ('building, mining and engineering operations'), and any change in the use of the land ('material change of use').

Certain types of development do not require planning permission, which is known as 'Permitted Development'. Section 55 of the TCPA 1990 defines the meaning of 'development' and 'new development'. Section 55(2) sets out the numerous operations or uses of land which would not involve development of the land for the purposes of the Act. This includes operations under Section 55(2)(b) which includes, "*the carrying out on land within the boundaries of a road by a local highway authority of any works required for the maintenance or improvement of the road*". Such works would not constitute development and would not require planning permission. However, this excludes any such works which are not exclusively for the maintenance of the road and which may have significant adverse effects on the environment.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the 'GPDO 2015'), specifies categories of development for which permission is deemed to be granted and for which an application for express planning permission is therefore unnecessary.

Types of Permitted Development are defined in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). This includes in Part 9, Class A:

A. *The carrying out by a highway authority—*

(a) on land within the boundaries of a road, of any works required for the maintenance or improvement of the road, where such works involve development by virtue of section 55(2)(b)(g) of the Act; or

(b) on land outside but adjoining the boundary of an existing highway of works required for or incidental to the maintenance or improvement of the highway.

Where works being carried out meet the statutory definition of 'development' set out in the TCPA 1990, and none of the above-mentioned criteria for Permitted Development apply to the proposed development, planning permission will be required.

With reference to Section 55(1) of the TCPA 1990, the Scheme will comprise the development of a new highway adjoining but outside the existing highway boundary of the A350. The development would be defined as an engineering operation in, on, over or under the land, and the making of a material change in the use of the land. Consequently, the development of the Scheme will require planning permission.

'Regulation 3' Application

Local authorities are required to determine some of their own planning applications pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. Regulation 3 states:

"Subject to regulation 4, an application for planning permission by an interested planning authority to develop any land of that authority, or for development of any land by an interested planning authority or by an interested planning authority jointly with any other person, shall be determined by the authority concerned, unless the application is referred to the Secretary of State under section 77 of the 1990 Act for determination by him."

Consequently, the planning application will be prepared by Atkins Ltd on behalf of the Wiltshire Council Highway Authority as the 'Applicant' and submitted to Wiltshire Council (as the local planning authority) for determination under Regulation 3 of the TCPA 1990.

Secretary of State 'call in' powers

Under section 77(1) of the TCPA 1990, "*The Secretary of State may give directions requiring applications for planning permission [or permission in principle] ... to be referred to him instead of being dealt with by local planning authorities.*" The National Planning Practice Guidance, July 2019, provides guidance on '*Determining a planning application*'. This sets out that Section 77 of the TCPA 1990 empowers the Secretary of State to call in a planning application for his own determination. The power can be exercised at any time up to planning permission being issued by a local planning authority. In considering whether to call in a planning application, the Secretary of State is generally concerned with whether the application involves planning issues of more than local importance that warrant the decision being made by him rather than the local planning authority.

However, each case is considered on its merits. Any person may ask the Secretary of State to call in an application for his own determination. Applications may also be referred to the Secretary of State by the local planning authority under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021. The purpose of the Direction is to give the Secretary of State an opportunity to consider using the power to call in an application under section 77 of the TCPA 1990. If a planning application is called in, the decision on whether or not to grant planning permission will be taken by the Secretary of State, usually after a public inquiry, rather than the local planning authority.

It remains to be seen whether the proposed Scheme would warrant the Secretary of State to 'call in' the planning application from the local planning authority. The decision could be influenced by such considerations as the scale and impact of the proposals, the potential effects of the Scheme beyond the local area, such as traffic impact, the potential magnitude and severity of the environmental impacts, or the weight of potential objections to the Scheme.

Adoption of the new highway

The Highways Act 1980, Part I, Section 5, provides agreement with the Minister for Transport, for a local highway authority to maintain and improve certain highways that have been constructed. On the date that such an agreement is made, the Council becomes the highway authority for the highway to which the agreement relates. It is anticipated that upon final completion of the Scheme, the principal contractor would be responsible for the maintenance and correction of any defects for a period of at least 5 years, followed by formal handover of the Scheme to Wiltshire Council. Melksham Bypass would then be adopted by the Wiltshire Council Highways Authority for the maintenance and improvement of the road in perpetuity, including all associated highway infrastructure, drainage, structures, planting and vegetation.

2.3.1. Environmental Impact Assessment

The requirement for certain projects to report their effects on the environment is derived from European Union (EU) legislation, initially in Council Directive 85/337/EEC, on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. This legislation has been amended three times, in 1997, in 2003 and in 2009, with the amendments codified by Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011. The most recent changes have been adopted in UK legislation, for the purposes of planning applications, by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations 2017'), which transposes changes made to EU Directive 2011/92/EU1 ("the EIA Directive 2011") by EU Directive 2014/52/EU2.

The EIA Regulations 2017 cover the circumstances under which an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be required to accompany an application for planning permission.

Under Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations 2017, an EIA is required in every case where the proposed works fall within the descriptions of development defined in the Schedule. Schedule 1, Part 7(3) outlines development relating to: "*Construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or realignment and/or widening of an existing road of two lanes or less so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new road, or realigned and/or widened section of road, would be 10 kilometres or more in a continuous length*". Although the Scheme would involve the development of a new bypass, this would comprise a single carriageway with one lane in each direction (i.e. two lanes only) and would therefore not be defined as 'Schedule 1 development' according to these definitions.

Part 1(2) of the EIA Regulations 2017 defines 'Schedule 2 development' as development where any part of the works is to be carried out in a sensitive area; or any applicable threshold or criterion in the corresponding part of column 2 of the table in Schedule 2, is exceeded or met in relation to that development.

'Sensitive areas', as defined under Part 1(2) of the EIA Regulations 2017, include a range of statutory environmental and heritage designations, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Parks, the Norfolk Broads, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a European site (protected for its ecological or biodiversity value). The proposed Scheme does not lie within a 'sensitive area' as defined in the EIA Regulations 2017.

However, under Part 10(f) of the EIA Regulations 2017, the Scheme would be defined as an infrastructure project involving the construction of a road, where the area of the works exceeds 1 hectare. Given the Scheme could be approximately 5 miles in length, the total area of the proposed works will exceed the 1-hectare threshold under Part 10(f) of the EIA Regulations 2017, such that the Scheme would be defined as 'Schedule 2 development'.

EIA Screening

The EIA Regulations 2017 require that if any part of a development is to be carried out in a 'sensitive area', or the area of works exceeds the thresholds and criterion set out in Schedule 2, then the development will require screening to determine whether it is likely to have significant effects on the environment, requiring an EIA.

An EIA screening opinion will therefore be required from the local planning authority (Wiltshire Council) in accordance with Part 2, Regulation 6 of the EIA Regulation 2017. A screening assessment will need to be carried out to identify the environmental features of the Scheme and any measures envisaged to avoid, prevent or mitigate what might otherwise have significant effects on the environment and include these with the information required to inform the screening opinion request to the local planning authority.

It is envisaged that the screening assessment would be carried out upon the single preferred route option identified as part of the OBC process. However, if further route options are to be considered, these would be included in the assessment covering a broader geographical spread, to provide greater flexibility for the continuation of the options appraisal process, if this forms part of the Scheme development going forward.

The assessment would need to follow the selection criteria for the screening of Schedule 2 development, as defined under Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations 2017. These require consideration of the characteristics of the development; the location of the development in terms of the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected; and the types and characteristics of the potential impacts.

A number of individual surveys and assessments would be required to inform the preparation of an EIA Screening Report, to address the following topic areas:

- The use and capacity of natural resources (in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity);
- Waste production;
- Pollution and other nuisances (including noise pollution);
- Risks to population and human health;
- Biodiversity (habitats and species);
- Landscape and visual impact (including impacts on trees);
- Cultural heritage and archaeology;
- Transport and access;
- Land use and planning;
- Land stability and climate change;
- Cumulative effects with other existing development and/or committed development; and
- Transboundary impacts.

EIA Scoping

Given the nature and scale of the development, it is likely that the local planning authority's screening opinion would confirm that the Scheme is EIA development. The EIA Regulations 2017 advise that if a project is subject to EIA, applicants should limit the scope of assessment to those aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly affected. The purpose of an EIA Scoping Report is therefore to determine the extent of issues to be considered in the EIA and reported in the Environmental Statement. There is also the opportunity for an applicant to ask the local planning authority for its opinion on what information needs to be included, which is called a 'scoping opinion'. The request for a Scoping Opinion is made in accordance with Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations and, whilst not mandatory for developers or project promoters, is an excellent opportunity to encourage the local planning authority to clarify what it considers the main effects of a development are likely to be and therefore, the aspects on which the Environmental Statement should focus.

Regulation 15(2)(a) of the EIA Regulations 2017, lists the information that an applicant must provide as a minimum when making a request for a Scoping Opinion in relation to a planning application. These are:

- *'a plan sufficient to identify the land;*
- *a brief description of the nature and purpose of the development, including its location and technical capacity;*
- *an explanation of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, and*
- *such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make'.*

The local planning authority must consult the relevant consultees as identified in Regulations 2(1) of the EIA Regulations 2017 (for this Scheme, this would be any body that the planning authority is required to consult, or

would normally consult if an application for planning permission for the development in question were before them, for instance: Wiltshire Council officers, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency).

In accordance with Regulation 15(4) of the EIA Regulations, the local planning authority must provide its scoping opinion within five weeks of receiving a request and the opinion should be proportionate, tailored to the specific characteristics of the development and the main environmental features that it considers likely to be significantly affected. This should be achieved by taking into account the following details, as specified in Regulation 15(6) of the EIA Regulations: 2017:

- *'any information provided by the applicant about the proposed development;*
- *the specific characteristics of the particular development;*
- *the specific characteristics of development of the type concerned; and*
- *the environmental features likely to be significantly affected by the development.'*

As outlined above, the preparation of an EIA Scoping Report and request for a Scoping Opinion introduces an obligation for the local planning authority to consult with relevant prescribed stakeholders (under Regulation 15(4) of the EIA Regulations). It is therefore recommended that the EIA Scoping Report include the following information for comment to maximise the value of the stakeholder engagement:

- key environmental constraints and opportunities;
- methodologies to be adopted for the assessment of each issue;
- an explanation of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, highlighting differences between the route options;
- preliminary proposals for mitigation and enhancement measures; and
- initial conclusions on the likelihood of significant residual environmental effects occurring, highlighting differences between the route options.

Environmental Statement

A planning application which is being supported by an EIA must be accompanied by an Environmental Statement for the purposes of the EIA Regulations 2017. In accordance with Regulation 18(3), an Environmental Statement must include at least the following information:

(a) a description of the proposed development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;

(b) a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment;

(c) a description of any features of the proposed development, or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;

(d) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;

(e) a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and

(f) any additional information specified in Schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the particular development or type of development and to the environmental features likely to be significantly affected.

In addition, in accordance with Regulation 18(4), an Environmental Statement must be based on the most recent scoping opinion issued (so far as the proposed development remains materially the same as the proposed development which was subject to that opinion); and include the information reasonably required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment. If possible, duplication of assessment should be avoided, if the results of any relevant UK environmental assessment are reasonably available.

2.4. National and Local Planning Context

Overview

Section 70(2) of the TCPA 1990 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in July 2021, represents up-to-date Government planning policy and is a material consideration that must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application or appeal. This includes the presumption in favour of development found at paragraph 11 of the NPPF. If decision makers choose not to follow the NPPF, where it is a material consideration, clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed.

Paragraph 48 of the NPPF states that decision makers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to: (1) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan; (2) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies in the emerging plan; and (3) the degree of consistency of relevant policies to the policies in the NPPF.

The development plan currently comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted in January 2015, the saved policies of the adopted West Wiltshire District Plan, January 2004, the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan approved in February 2020, **the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan Document (DPD) approved in February 2009** and adopted Minerals and Waste Plans.

Planning applications are currently determined by Wiltshire Council in accordance with the above adopted development plan, with the policies of the NPPF taken into account as a material consideration. The emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review is at an early stage of preparation. The current aim is to complete the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan for public consultation at the end of **2022**. The intention is that upon adoption of the Wiltshire Local Plan (**in 2024**), this will replace the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the saved policies of the adopted West Wiltshire District Plan, to form part of the adopted development plan.

The current schedule for the submission of the planning application for the proposed Scheme is spring 2024. The application would therefore be determined in accordance with the Wiltshire Local Plan, assuming it has reached adoption by then. In the intervening period, the preparation of the planning application would need to be based on the currently adopted development plan, with the policies of the emerging Local Plan afforded increasing weight as each successive stage of the Local Plan Review is reached.

It is intended that the principle of development for the Scheme will be supported by the proposed safeguarding of the preferred route option within the emerging Local Plan. The process is described in Chapter 3 of this Strategy, which identifies that the OBC and preferred route selection is due for submission to the DfT in **November 2021**, which will provide the evidence base to include the safeguarded route corridor within the Pre-Submission Draft, for public consultation and stakeholder engagement **in 2022**.

Policy Review

The planning context for the Scheme has been determined from a review of the policy documents listed below (with a full summary provided in 'Melksham Bypass Planning Policy Context, August 2021', document reference WC-MBP-ATK-GEN-XX-RP-TB-000004).

National policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (2019)

Adopted Development Plan:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (January 2015)
- 'Saved policies' of the 'West Wiltshire District Plan – First Alteration (June 2004)
- Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (February 2020)
- **West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD (February 2009)**

Emerging Local Plan:

- Wiltshire and Swindon Joint Spatial Framework (evidence base for the Local Plan Review)
- Wiltshire Local Plan Review (2016-2036), incorporating:
 - 'Planning for Melksham'
- **Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-2026), July 2021**

Other relevant policy documents, assessments, plans and strategies:

- Wiltshire Statement of Community Involvement (July 2020)
- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)

- Western Gateway Vision
- Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (2011-2026)
- Wiltshire Climate Strategy Consultation Draft (September 2021)

National policy

2.4.1. National Planning Policy Framework

The revised NPPF, July 2021, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The NPPF emphasises that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development, resulting in positive growth and economic, environmental and social progress. The NPPF is based upon a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Its dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform the following roles:

- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
- An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.

Sustainable Transport

Chapter 9 of the NPPF 'Promoting sustainable transport' recognises that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development. In terms of relevance to the proposed Scheme, paragraph 104 of the NPPF states "*Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:*

- a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;*
- b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;*
- c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;*
- d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and*
- e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places."*

With relevance to the Scheme, paragraph 106 of the NPPF advises that planning policies should:

- b) be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned;*
- c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development;*
- d) provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks;*
- e) provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy."*

Climate Change and Flood Risk

Chapter 14 of the NPPF (titled 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change') states in paragraph 152 that, "*The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change.*" Paragraph 154 emphasises that new development should be planned for in ways that, "*avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to*

ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure”.

In terms of ‘Planning and Flood Risk’, paragraph 159 requires that, *“Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.”*

Natural Environment

Chapter 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 174 states that *“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.

Historic Environment

Chapter 16 “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment” sets out the strategy for the historic environment within paragraphs 189 to 208. Paragraph 194 outlines:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”

Engagement

Chapter 4 of the NPPF deals with pre-application engagement and paragraph 39 advises that, *“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community”.*

2.4.2. National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on 6 March 2014 as a web-based resource (<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/>) and **last updated in August 2021**. The Planning Practice Guidance is a material consideration for all planning decisions. It provides guidance on procedural matters (including planning conditions and obligations), and on numerous material planning considerations. The topics relevant to the Scheme include:

- Consultation and pre-decision matters - sets out processes and expectations for consultations for planning applications;
- Climate Change - advises how planning can identify suitable mitigation and adaptation measures in plan-making and the application process to address the potential impacts of climate change;
- Flood risk and coastal change - advises on how planning can take account of the risks associated with flooding in plan-making and the application process;
- Natural environment - explains key issues in implementing policy to protect biodiversity, including local requirements; and

- Health and Wellbeing - the plan-making and decision-making process must assess potential pollution and other environmental hazards, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health.

The NPPG on “*Transport evidence basis in plan making and decision taking*” was published in March 2015. Whilst not of direct relevance to the Scheme, the guidance does set out the general aim of inter alia: “*enhancing accessibility; supporting economic vitality; and enabling other highway and transport authorities/service providers to support and deliver the transport infrastructure that conforms to the Local Plan,*”

Adopted Development Plan

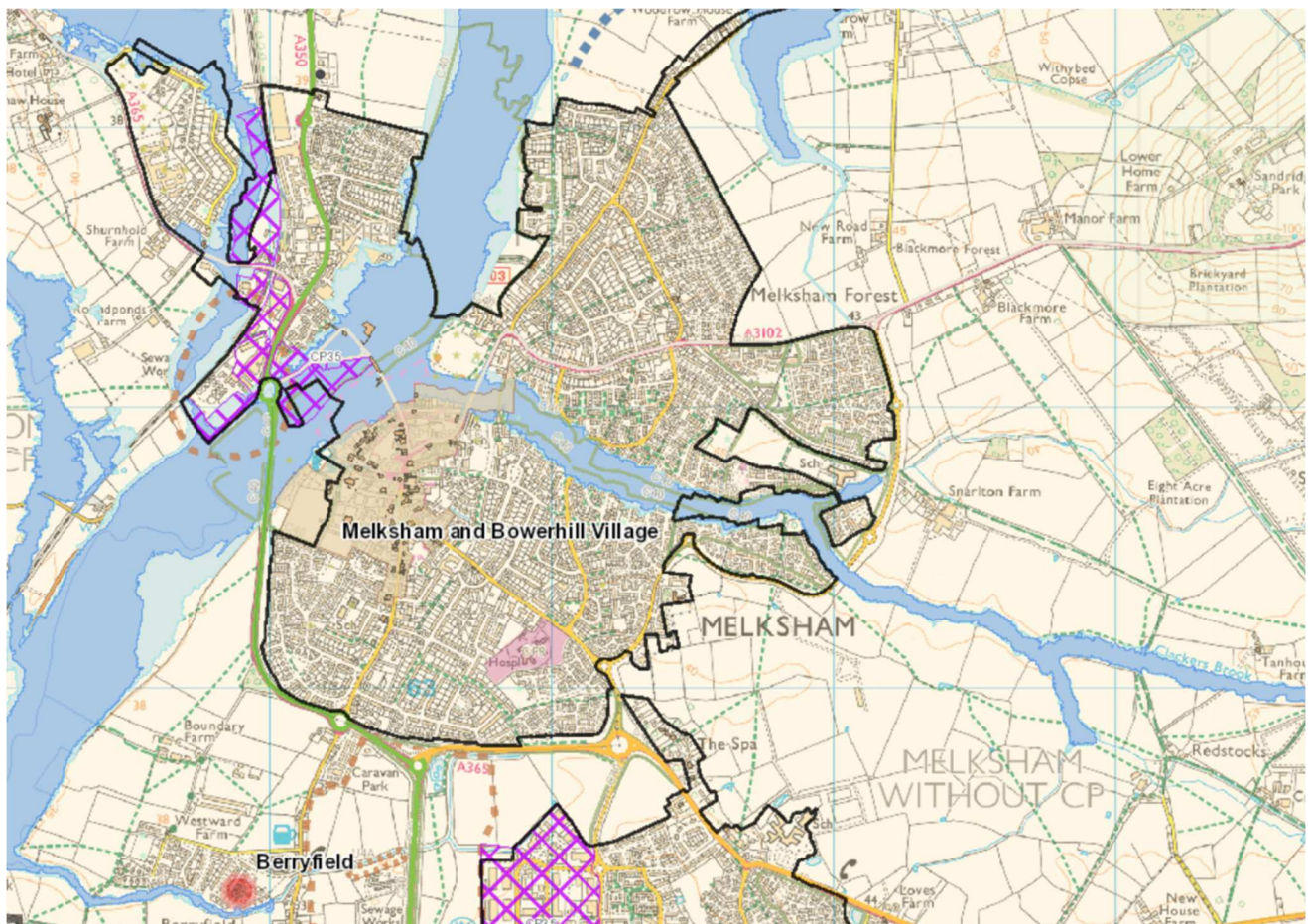
As outlined above, planning applications submitted for development proposals in Melksham are determined in accordance with the adopted development plan, comprising the Wiltshire Core Strategy, January 2015; the saved policies of the adopted West Wiltshire District Plan, January 2004; the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan approved in February 2020; **the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD (February 2009)**; and adopted Minerals and Waste Plans.

2.4.3. Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)

The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document (WCS) was formally adopted on 20 January 2015. The plan provides a positive and flexible overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire for the period up to 2026. The WCS covers the whole of Wiltshire (excluding Swindon) and sets out the Council’s Spatial Vision, Key Objectives and Overall Principles of Development in the County.

The Core Strategy includes strategic planning policies to guide and control the overall scale, type and location of development and divides Wiltshire into Community Areas. The Melksham Community Area covers 11 parishes in total, and Melksham Town is the main settlement (the Melksham Community Area).

Figure 2-2 - Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposals Map (extract)



Spatial planning

The WCS defines the spatial vision for the Plan area, identifies a number of objectives to achieve the vision and sets out the development strategy to meet these objectives. The Strategy includes strategic planning policies to guide and control the overall scale, type and location of development and divides Wiltshire into Community Areas. The Melksham Community Area covers 11 parishes in total, and Melksham Town is the main settlement (the Melksham Community Area).

The Core Strategy prescribes the number of homes to be built in the Melksham Community Area by 2026, comprising 2,240 for Melksham (Town and Bowerhill) and 130 for the remainder of the Community Area. Development over the plan period to date has exceeded the housing numbers set out in the Core Strategy and there are no additional sites for housing allocated for Melksham (based on the Wiltshire Council Housing Land Supply Statement, April 2018).

Core Policy 2 focuses development within the defined settlement boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map (Figure 2-2) and carried forward from the West Wiltshire District Plan (see Figure 2-3 below). The policy states that the limits of development may only be altered through the identification of sites for development through subsequent Site Allocations DPDs.

Core Policy 2 also outlines the delivery strategy and uses the sub-county areas within the Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) to identify where housing and employment growth will be delivered. Melksham is located within the North and West Wiltshire Housing Market Area (HMA) which has a minimum housing requirement of 24,740 dwellings (2006-2026). In relation to the housing requirement, development is directed at a strategic level to the most suitable, sustainable locations.

The Melksham Area Strategy aims to ensure that an appropriate and balanced mix of housing and employment growth is managed to provide contributions to town centre improvement and delivery of enhanced services in the town.

Strategic Transport

The WCS states that sections of the A350 carry the highest volume of traffic and HGV movements on the county's non-trunk primary routes and sets out the intention for the route to be selectively improved to maintain and enhance journey times, with the aim of supporting planned development growth.

Core Policy 66 relates to the strategic transport network in which it states that work will be undertaken in conjunction with the Highways Agency, Network Rail, transport operators, neighbouring authorities and other agencies, that will seek to develop and improve the strategic transport network to support the objectives and policies in the Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan. Core Policy 66 reiterates that *"the strategic transport network along the A350 corridor will be maintained, managed and selectively improved to support development growth at Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster."*

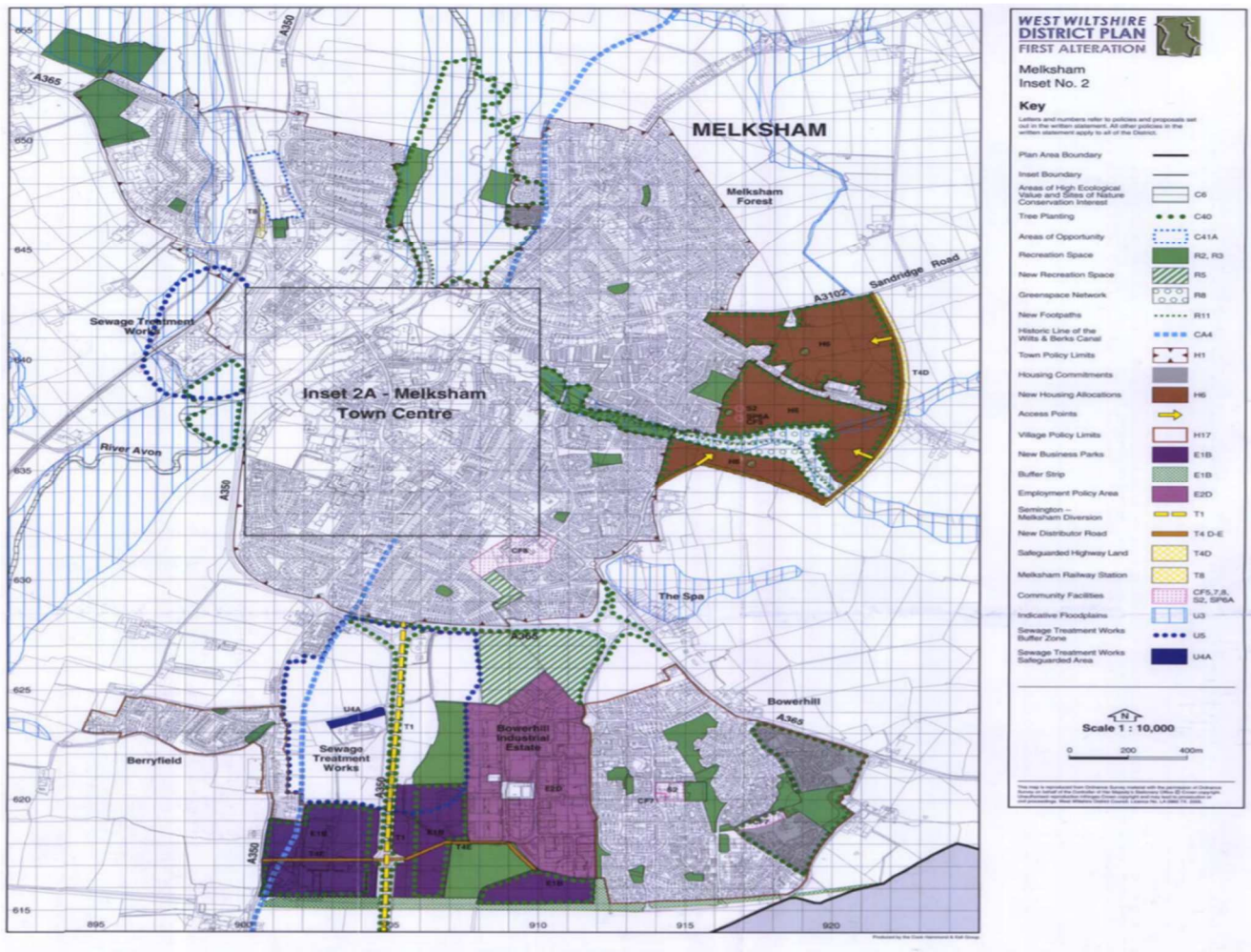
Planning Policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) with relevance to the Scheme are listed and summarised in the 'Melksham Bypass Planning Policy Context', document August 2021.

2.4.4. West Wiltshire District Plan – First Alteration (June 2004) – Saved Policies

The 'saved policies' of the West Wiltshire District Plan – First Alteration (2004) continue to form part of the Development Plan for the area. As outlined in Annex 1 of the NPPF, due weight should be given to the relevant policies in this existing plan according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. The saved policies of relevance to the Scheme are summarised in 'Melksham Bypass Planning Policy Context, August 2021'.

Figure 2-3 provides an extract of Melksham Proposals Map which shows the sites that were allocated for development and are now either under construction or substantially complete and absorbed with the defined settlement limits of Melksham, as illustrated in Figure 2-2 above.

Figure 2-3 - West Wiltshire District Plan (2004) Melksham Proposals Map



2.4.5. Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan

The Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan was adopted in February 2020. The Plan outlines housing completions in the period 2006-17, along with developable commitments to 2026. The report suggests that the requirement set out in the Wiltshire Core Strategy is likely to be exceeded in Melksham, with 2,558 houses expected to be completed by 2026 (318 over the required 2,240). This is based on several major planning permissions having been granted for new housing developments on the south and eastern edges of Melksham near Western Way, Spa Road and Eastern Way (see Figure 2-4).

The plan allocates new sites for housing to ensure the delivery of homes across the plan period to 2026 and to help demonstrate a rolling five-year supply in each of Wiltshire's three HMA's. The Melksham Community Area is located within the North and West Wiltshire HMA. The plan identifies 2,240 dwellings to be delivered within the Melksham and Bowerhill area.

In terms of the overall housing requirement for Wiltshire, the Core Strategy has identified 11,700 dwellings committed/planned within the A350 corridor. The latest situation with housing delivery under the WCS is set out in Figure 2-5 below (the housing data is drawn from Tables 4.1, 4.7 and 4.10 of the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, February 2020).

Figure 2-4 - Extract of Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (Melksham)

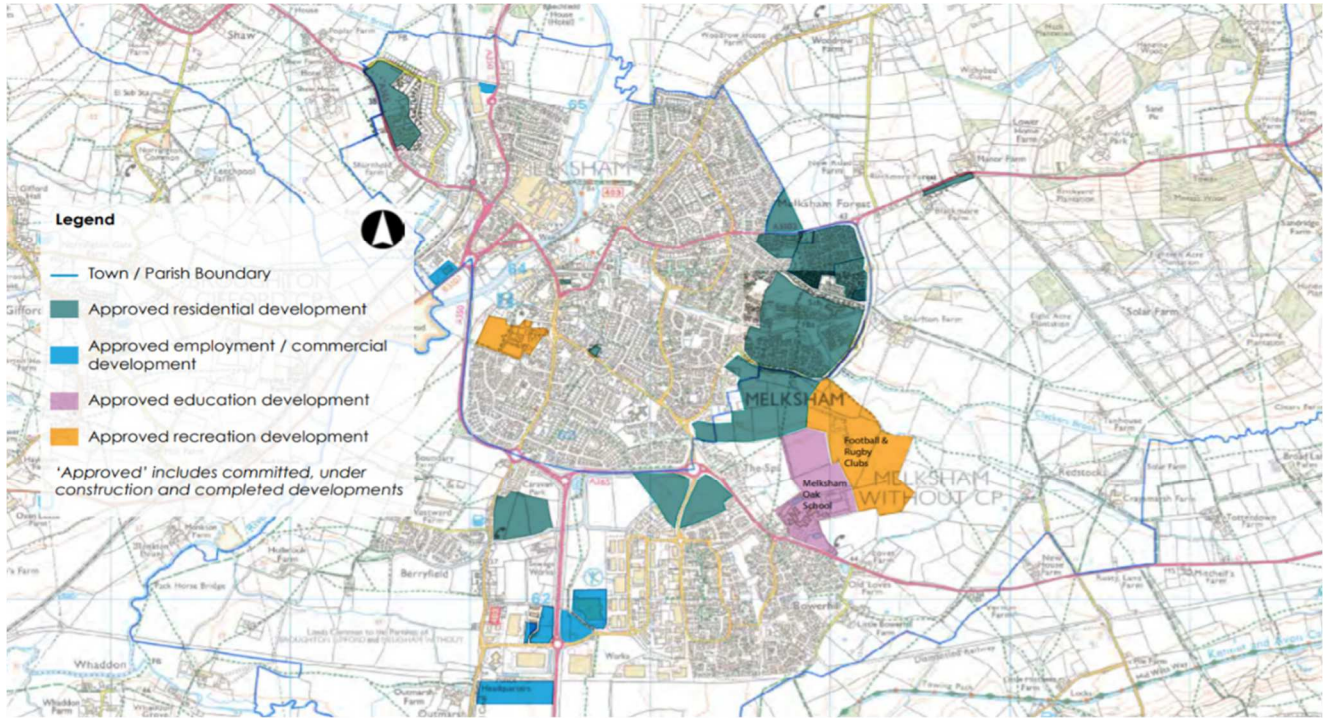


Figure 2-5 - Wiltshire housing delivery

	Minimum housing requirement	Housing completions (2006 – 2017)	Developable commitments (2017 – 2026)	Variation	New Plan allocations (2017 – 2026)
East HMA	5,940	3,624	2,311	-5	161
North & West HMA*	24,740	13,025	10,606	-1,109	1,103
South HMA	10,420	5,388	3,701	-1,331	804
Melksham**	2,240	1,445	1,113	+318	0

* North & West HMA includes key A350 corridor settlements: Chippenham, Trowbridge, Warminster, Westbury, Melksham
** Melksham comprises part of the North & West HMA, shown separately for reference

Melksham taking more than it's planned share of new housing

Source: Data drawn from the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, February 2020

Emerging Local Plan

2.4.6. Wiltshire and Swindon Joint Spatial Framework

The local planning authorities of Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council have been working together on an ongoing basis, to fulfil their legal requirement to co-operate with each other over issues that cross administrative boundaries. In November 2017, the two councils produced the Swindon and Wiltshire Joint Spatial Framework: Issues Paper. The intention was for the non-statutory Joint Spatial Framework (JSF) to guide the overall pattern of development across the wider area of the two councils, setting out a spatial distribution of new jobs, homes and infrastructure in the period 2016 to 2036, to inform the councils' individual local plan reviews.

The publication of the revised NPPF in February 2019, included the requirement for local authorities to prepare and maintain Statements of Common Ground, in order to document the cross-boundary matters being addressed and the progress in cooperating to address them. (This requirement has been carried over in the latest issue of the NPPF, published in July 2021). Work is now likely to focus on preparing a Statement of Common Ground between the two local authorities. The preparation of the JSF will continue, the scope of

which will be determined by the Statement of Common Ground. The JSF may be reduced in scope compared to that previously proposed, for example, it may only focus on employment land and infrastructure delivery. It will become evidence to inform each individual local plan review enabling the preparation of separate but aligned local plans. Moving forward each Local Plan review will take its lead from the broader strategy included within the Joint Spatial Framework.

2.4.7. Wiltshire Local Plan Review (2016-2036)

The Local Plan Review will roll forward the current plan period up to 2036 and seeks to drive the sustainable growth and development of Wiltshire over the next 20 years. Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council began a review of their Local Plans in November 2017, in the form of a consultation on the issues to be considered to plan for the period to 2036. Wiltshire Council is reviewing the Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted in January 2015, which identifies land for development for the period to 2026.

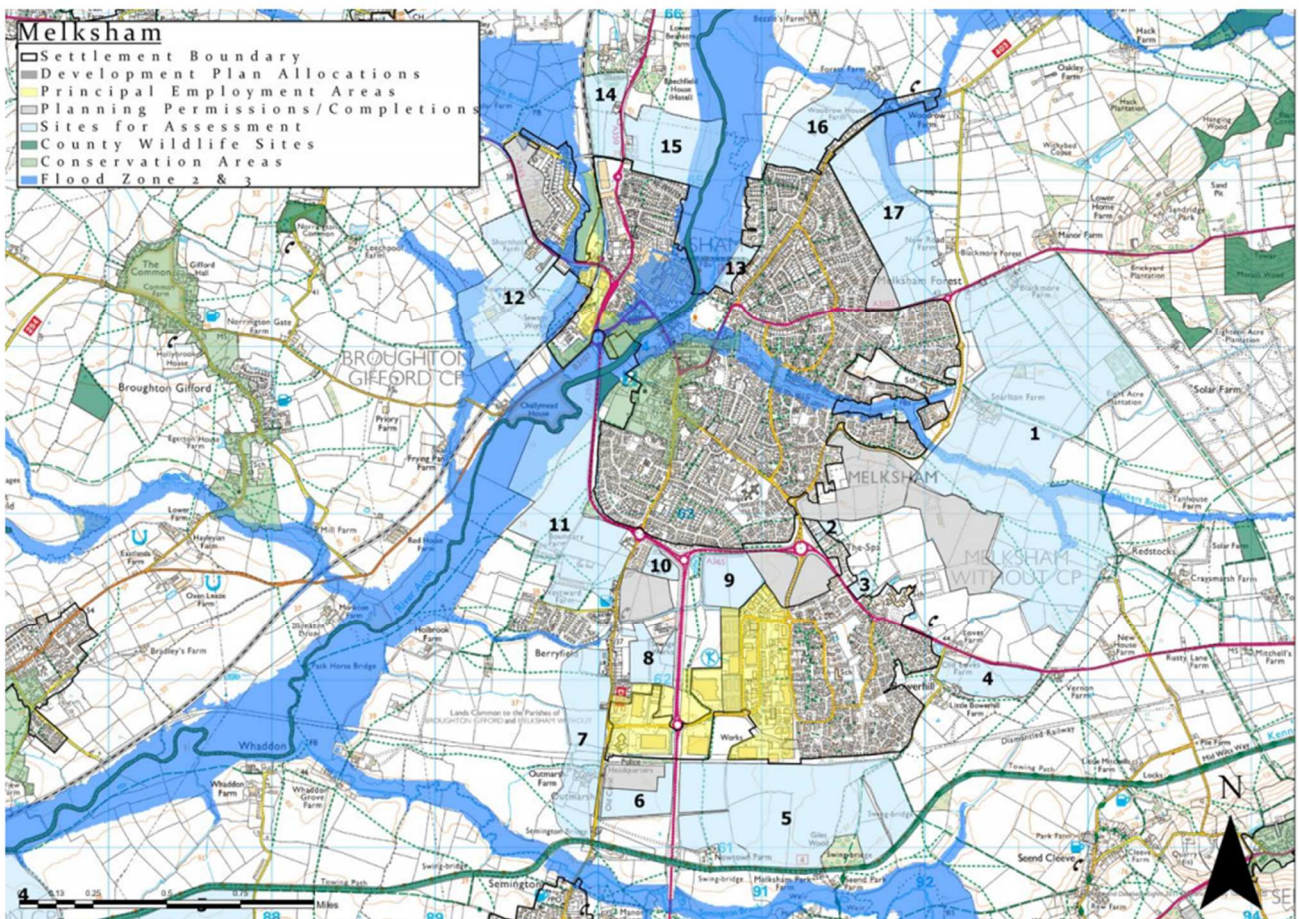
Wiltshire Council carried out an initial consultation from January to March 2021, to inform the preparation of the Wiltshire Local Plan Review. The initial consultation focussed on a number of topics, including how growth (additional new homes and employment land) could be distributed around the county, with details set out in an 'Emerging Spatial Strategy' paper. This included levels of growth, with potential locations for development and place shaping priorities for each of the county's main settlements (documented in a series of 'Planning for' papers for each Market Town and Principal Settlement).

'Planning for Melksham'

As outlined above, the current Wiltshire Core Strategy identifies a requirement of 2,240 homes for Melksham up to 2026. The emerging strategy proposes a requirement of 3,950 homes for the plan period 2016-2036. The emerging Local Plan sets out draft place shaping priorities and states that: "An A350 bypass to the town is a priority to improve the efficiency of the transport network and lead to other benefits for the town"

Figure 2-6 below identifies land around Melksham and Bowerhill which is being promoted for development by landowners. It is noted within the document that "a large amount of land is required in order to meet strategic housing requirements". Seventeen potential sites have been identified in Melksham which require further assessment of their development potential. The sites are identified in the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), 2017.

Figure 2-6 - Wiltshire Local Plan Review: Melksham



2.4.8. Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-2026)

Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council prepared a draft Neighbourhood Plan for the Melksham Neighbourhood Area in June 2020. The Plan proposes a number of planning policies which, once adopted, must be used in the determination of planning applications within the Parishes.

Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council consulted on the draft Neighbourhood Plan for a period of 8 weeks between Monday 1st June – Monday 27th July 2020. An Independent Examination of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan was carried out in February/March 2021. Wiltshire Council issued their Decision Statement in April 2021, stating that the Council is satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, complies with the legal requirements and meets the Basic Conditions.

The final Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum Version, May 2021) was considered at the Wiltshire Council Referendum, held on 1st July 2021, with the motion successfully carried. **The Plan was therefore 'made' in July 2021.** This confirms that Wiltshire Council will now refer to the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan in determining planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

The Referendum Version, May 2021, includes 10 long list route options for the potential Melksham Bypass, which are located within the boundary of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area. The draft policies of relevance to the Scheme are summarised in 'Melksham Bypass Planning Policy Context, August 2021'

Priority Statement 3: Transport Infrastructure - Bypass

Priority Statement 3 sets out the importance of infrastructure needed within Melksham. It states that the Town and Parish Councils will support efforts by Wiltshire Council to progress the delivery of a Bypass and that in order for sustainable development to take place in Melksham and reduce high levels of traffic congestion on the A350, a By-pass to the town is a priority. It states this will need to improve the efficiency of the A350 as well as improve the local economy and meet other economic objectives for the town.

The Priority Statement reports that in February 2020, the Department for Transport requested further development of the scheme through a contribution to the Outline Business Case:

"...the A350 Melksham Bypass and A338 Southern Salisbury Junction Improvements schemes have been approved to progress to the next stage of development under the Major Road Network (MRN) and Large Local Majors (LLM) programme. To help the scheme progress to the next stage, the Department will make a contribution of £1.33 million and £170,000 respectively towards the costs of developing the Outline Business Cases (OBC)".

Wiltshire Council will now develop outline business cases for the two schemes to enable them to progress to the next stage of development. The Priority Statement emphasises that:

"The Melksham scheme will bypass the town centre and in turn resolve a critical pinch-point on the A350, improving north to south connectivity throughout the Western Gateway. It is a part of a package of road improvement measures that will improve the northern section of this north-south route."

Other relevant policy documents, assessments, plans and strategies

2.4.9. Wiltshire Statement of Community Involvement (July 2020)

The adopted Wiltshire Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines the requirements for community engagement and consultation. The document states that pre-application consultations are not a statutory requirement, but pre-application discussions are encouraged to advise whether the principle of a development is acceptable. However, the document strongly encourages applicants to carry out local consultations with local people, communities (including Town and Parish Councils) and with neighbours for developments on sites of 1 hectare or more. The document states that local consultations should occur at the earliest opportunity to raise awareness and provide a reasonable time framework for developers to receive feedback, prior to submitting a planning application.

2.4.10. Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)

A Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) was prepared by Wiltshire Council in August 2017, as a requirement of paragraph 159 of the NPPF, March 2012 (now superseded by paragraph 68 of the latest version of the NPPF, July 2021). The SHELAA identifies *the "suitability, availability and achievability of land for both housing and economic development"* to meet future development needs. It states that the SHELAA does not allocate land but aims to:

- Identify sites and broad locations with potential for development;

- Assess their development potential and suitability; and
- Assess the likelihood of development coming forward (the availability and achievability).

The document outlines the SHELAA methodology used, an approach adopted from Planning Practice Guidance (2014), and states that the outputs of the SHELAA report form an important evidence base for the local plan-making process.

2.4.11. Western Gateway Vision

The Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body (STB) includes the councils - Bath and North East Somerset, BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole), Bristol City, Dorset, Gloucestershire County, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and the West of England Combined Authority. The vision of the Western Gateway STB is to enable sustainable economic growth by identifying a long-term investment programme designed to deliver a well-connected, reliable and resilient strategic transport system; that closes productivity gaps and makes the Gateway area more competitive, while respecting its world class natural and built environments.

The A350 Melksham Bypass scheme is identified as a Large Local Major (LLM) Scheme within the Western Gateway (STB). *“The A350 Melksham Bypass Scheme will resolve a critical pinch-point on a route prioritised by the Western Gateway STB to improve north / south connectivity and will complement several of the MRN priorities. This scheme forms part of a package of measures to initially improve access within the northern access of the route. It is envisaged that improvements to the southern section of the route will be prioritised within the next funding round. Improvements to this corridor will fundamentally improve access and enable significant opportunities for growth throughout the Gateway area.”*

2.4.12. Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026

The Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) published in March 2011, aims to steer the implementation of national transport policies at the local level. As a strategic document, the LTP does not contain details of specific schemes. Rather, it sets out a long-term transport strategy, a shorter-term implementation plan and a number of supporting strategies for Wiltshire. These include strategies for Public Transport, Road Safety, Accessibility and Cycling, all of which will have some relevance to the design development of the bypass proposals and any associated active travel measures to be proposed within Melksham.

Preferred options are set out in the document which include network management measures, to ease congestion at significant 'hot spots' and maintain journey time reliability on key routes. In terms of cycling, the objectives include the provision of a sympathetically designed, high quality and well-maintained network of cycle routes in the market towns, and where appropriate, provide links between the market towns and to national cycle routes. A series of Cycle Network Plans have been prepared for a number of towns within Wiltshire to help to achieve this objective, including Melksham.

Wiltshire Council has commenced a review of the current Local Transport Plan to provide a replacement plan (LTP4), which is at an early stage of development.

2.4.13. Wiltshire Climate Strategy 2022-2027

In February 2019, Wiltshire Council resolved to acknowledge a climate emergency to seek to make the county of Wiltshire (and the Council itself) carbon neutral by 2030. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group was set up to gather evidence and develop recommendations on achieving net zero. The Council is preparing a new carbon reduction strategy to aim to meet these commitments, based on an assessment to assist in identifying needs and determining priorities. The plan includes a community led approach which will engage, empower, enable and communicate with Wiltshire communities and businesses.

As a precursor to the development of the new Wiltshire Climate Strategy, the Council prepared a Climate Strategy Discussion Document in January 2021, which provided an overview of the scale of the challenge and the opportunities ahead, as a basis for discussion. The document described the challenges and opportunities in relation to carbon reduction and climate resilience based on six delivery themes, which included transport and travel.

DfT analysis carried out in 2016, shows that road traffic is the biggest source of emissions within domestic UK transport, providing 91% of the total transport emissions. Wiltshire is a rural county, so car use is even more prevalent for most residents. The DfT research shows that a total of 87% of personal trips in rural areas are made by car or van; and 78% in urban areas. The county of Wiltshire has over one third of a million vehicles (290,000 cars and 50,000 vans) for a population of half a million (DfT data, 2020). However, balanced against this the 2011 Census evidenced that 15% of Wiltshire households did not have access to a car or van. Almost 4 billion miles were driven on Wiltshire roads in 2019, contributing to this national figure.

Drawing on the responses received from the Discussion Document, Wiltshire Council published the Wiltshire Draft Climate Strategy for public consultation in September 2021. The strategy is structured around seven delivery themes, which comprise: Transport; Homes and the Built Environment; Natural Environment, Food and Farming; Energy; the Green economy; Waste; becoming a Carbon Neutral Council; and Working Together. The consultation draft includes a number of proposed strategies, targets and timelines for delivery.

The delivery theme for Transport includes a number of commitments and proposed initiatives, based on the following objectives:

- To achieve a transport system in Wiltshire that has zero carbon emissions, acknowledging the different solutions for our towns and city versus rural villages.
- Creating the infrastructure for increased walking, cycling, shared and public transport and use of alternative fuels, including electric vehicle charging points
- Achieving high-quality, bus-based, public transport and transport hubs that offer a pleasant and convenient way to get around, and seamless combined journeys
- Locating and designing new developments to reduce the need to travel and provide more opportunities for people to travel by zero or low carbon transport modes, for work, leisure and errands

Achieving a 'carbon neutral' development for Melksham Bypass will obviously be a significant challenge. It is envisaged that the impacts of development would be offset by a series of complementary carbon reduction measures, to include new tree planting as a 'carbon sink' to help to absorb carbon dioxide generated by vehicles, and active travel improvements within Melksham town centre, with linkages to the wider cycling network.

3. Safeguarding the Preferred Route Corridor

3.1. Aims of safeguarding the route

Meetings held between the Melksham Bypass project team and Wiltshire Council's local planning team in spring 2021, have confirmed that the Council intends to safeguard a corridor of land to accommodate the preferred route of Melksham Bypass in the emerging Local Plan Review.

The principal aim of safeguarding the route will be to assist in meeting the strategic transport objectives for the area, which are set out in the Local Transport Plan and the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS). The development of the bypass would increase the capacity of the strategic road network and relieve existing traffic problems within Melksham town centre, while supporting growth in the wider area. However, the bypass would not serve as a means to deliver specific housing or employment sites within Melksham, and no direct vehicular access would be created from the bypass to future development sites.

3.2. Policy position

Currently, there are no specific policy references to the provision of a bypass for Melksham within the adopted WCS, with the policy 'hook' for any such development only provided by Core Policy 66, which states that: *"the strategic transport network along the A350 corridor will be maintained, managed and selectively improved to support development growth at Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster."*

The Wiltshire Local Plan Review process is underway, which is exploring and engaging with the public and key stakeholders regarding the potential distribution of new housing and employment land around the county, including levels of growth, potential locations for development and place shaping priorities for each of the county's main settlements. The document 'Planning for Melksham' makes specific reference to the development of a bypass as one of the priorities, stating that: *"An A350 bypass to the town is a priority to improve the efficiency of the transport network and lead to other benefits for the town"*.

The Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, prepared by Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council, was 'made' in July 2021. The document includes references and a plan showing the 10 long list route options for the potential bypass, all of which are located within the boundary of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area. The supporting document 'Draft Priority Statement 4: Transport Infrastructure', states that the Town and Parish Councils will support efforts by Wiltshire Council to progress the delivery of a By-Pass, identifying it as a priority for the town in order for sustainable development to take place in Melksham, improve the local economy and reduce high levels of traffic congestion on the A350. It goes on to state that: *"The Melksham scheme... will bypass the town centre and in turn resolve a critical pinch-point on the A350, improving north to south connectivity throughout the Western Gateway. It is a part of a package of road improvement measures that will improve the northern section of this north-south route."*

In planning policy terms, the first opportunity to formally retain the land required to deliver the Melksham Bypass development will be to incorporate the proposed safeguarded corridor for the preferred route within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan scheduled for consultation at the end of 2022. The intention is that this document will include the preferred housing and employment development sites selected for consultation, including proposals for associated facilities and strategic infrastructure. Formal consultation would be sought throughout the Local Plan Review process, to engage with members of the public, local communities, statutory bodies and other organisations, finally leading to Public Examination of the Submission Draft Local Plan and determination by the relevant Secretary of State.

3.3. Evidence base requirements

The Pre-Submission Draft is likely to state that "improvements to the A350", which include Chippenham and Melksham, have a strategic and pivotal role in delivering housing growth. The timing of building new homes before and after the roads programme will need careful planning to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place to support the housing delivery. Therefore, a degree of certainty is needed for the delivery of the bypass.

In this way, it will be important to provide suitable information or 'evidence base' to inform the Local Plan Review process, in order to fully justify the inclusion of the proposed safeguarded route corridor for the bypass

within the Plan. It will be important to demonstrate that the various route options have been thoroughly tested and consulted upon as part of the OBC preparation, with sound evidence provided to support the selection of the preferred route option.

In addition, evidence will be required to demonstrate the location and full extent of the land required to deliver the development of the bypass, including associated mitigation land, in order to identify and retain the preferred route corridor on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

As outlined in section 1.4.2, the Design Strategy Record provides details regarding the design development process to date, and the high-level assessment of the route options is set out in the draft OAR, prepared in April 2021. The purpose of the OAR is to document the process of identifying a suitable transport intervention that would address current and future transport problems identified with respect to the A350 through Beanacre and Melksham. It ultimately seeks to identify better performing option(s) that demonstrate a good case to progress to further appraisal as part of a business case submission within the context of the DfT's Large Local Majors (LLM) fund and its associated objectives. The approach aligns with relevant government (DfT) guidance. The OAR reviews, refreshes and updates a previous OAR from 2017. This ensures that it is based upon the latest context and evidence and also aligns with the long list route options consultation exercise undertaken by Wiltshire Council between November 2020 and January 2021.

The Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report (PEAR) is currently being prepared in order to support the OBC, with the assessment to be carried out on the single full bypass route option to the east of Melksham, as identified by the OAR. The PEAR will identify the environmental constraints, assess the associated impacts and identify the land required to deliver the potential mitigation measures, all of which will assist in informing the safeguarding process within the Local Plan Review.

Regular engagement is underway between the Melksham Bypass project team and Wiltshire Council's planning team, to share information and ensure the route options development is aligned with the Local Plan Review process. The two processes are currently running in parallel, with the OBC and preferred route selection due for submission to the DfT in **November 2021**, and the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan scheduled for consultation at the end of **2022**. This will ensure that sufficient information is in place to confidently identify the safeguarded route corridor within the Pre-Submission Draft, for widespread public consultation and stakeholder engagement.

The ongoing Local Plan preparation from Pre-Submission Draft to Examination and Adoption would be approximately 2 years (completed by the end of 2023). DfT acceptance of the Melksham Bypass OBC would be in January 2022, allowing progression to the Final Business Case (FBC) to secure finding for the Bypass. The current programme indicates that the planning application for the Bypass would be submitted at the end 2023, with the FBC submitted after any grant of planning permission.

4. Pre-application stage

4.1. Overview of the approach

In order to prepare the Scheme for the planning application submission and the consenting process, the main areas of work within the pre-application stage are set out below (*including current progress*). The first stage, comprising the route options development for the bypass scheme, is synonymous with the steps currently underway to prepare the OBC. This stage will also provide the evidence base essential to justify the proposed development for the planning application and the acquisition of land required to deliver the Scheme. (The Options Assessment Report and Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report would not be submitted with the planning application but would be utilised to inform the EIA and relevant supporting statements/reports).

Table 4-1 - Pre-application stage tasks

Task	Notes / Progress
Route options development:	
• Selection and appraisal of long list route options	Completed
• Selection and appraisal of short list route options	Completed
• Design development of potential short list options	Completed
• Options Assessment Report (OAR)	Completed in May 2021 (copy is available on project webpage)

• Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report	Commenced June 2021
• Selection of preferred route option	By October 2021, to support the OAR
Preliminary Design development of the Scheme	Planned to commence in early 2022
Consultation and engagement	Underway and ongoing
Preparation of EIA and supporting documents/reports:	
• Surveys and evaluation	Ecology surveys Phase 1 completed, Phase 2 planned for early 2022
• Assessments	To be based on preliminary design
• Development of Environmental Mitigation Strategy	To be based on preliminary design
Design refinement	To produce the final Scheme for application submission
Assembly of land required to deliver the Scheme	Requiring landowner engagement, negotiation and agreement

This is broadly based on a sequential approach to the main areas of work, but will encompass elements of environmental assessment work, design evolution activities and consultation and engagement, at each key stage.

4.2. Route options development

The development of Scheme options has taken place over a number of years and has been informed by a range of technical studies. The Melksham Bypass scheme was initially considered in an Interim Options Assessment Report (IOAR) in 2016, and options were subsequently reviewed in an Options Assessment Report (OAR) in 2021. The OAR considered a full range of options, from non-highways-based solutions to partial bypass options and full bypass options. It concluded that a highways-based solution was the most appropriate to address the specific issues and objectives. The assessment resulted in three potential alignments for an eastern bypass of the town. In November 2017, a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) was produced and submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) where it was received favourably. A summary of the design development process for the long list and short list route options is provided in Appendix A.

Wiltshire Council is currently promoting the A350 Melksham Bypass scheme through the DfT's Large Local Majors (LLM) fund. In June 2019, Wiltshire Council (via the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body) submitted a new SOBC to the DfT. In March 2020, Wiltshire Council was awarded £1.3m funding by the DfT to develop the Scheme to the next stage of the business case process. Atkins has been commissioned by Wiltshire Council to prepare the OBC, with submission to DfT scheduled in **November 2021**.

4.2.1. Emerging route option

A total of 10 long list route options plus their variants (outlined in Appendix A) were the subject of a public consultation exercise from November 2020 to January 2021. This indicated general support for either an intermediate relief road or full bypass option to the east of Melksham. Detailed route options appraisal and early design development have continued on a series of short list route options, resulting in a single variant originally known as 'Option 10c' being identified, a full bypass option to the east of Melksham.

Work has commenced on the preparation of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report (PEAR), which will focus on Option 10c (emerging route) only. An environmental assessment of the shortlisted options will be undertaken using the desk study data from the OAR and supplemented with environmental surveys (where available). The air and noise assessments will include the traffic modelling data on the shortlisted options.

There are many factors to be taken into account in determining the preferred route option, including emerging guidance on carbon impacts, ecology, public health and road safety, landscape, archaeology, employment and the economy, flood risk and drainage, cost and economic benefit. The Option 10c bypass route will be subject to informal public consultation from 23rd June 2021, including ongoing stakeholder engagement. The final preferred option may be a variation of the route being consulted on in summer 2021, as the design will be further refined in response to the consultation.

The OAR, PEAR, design development process and the outcomes of public consultation and stakeholder engagement, will inform the preparation of the OBC for the Scheme, for submission to the DfT in **November 2021**. The assessment of Scheme options will be carried out in accordance with DfT guidance, primarily as set

out in DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (WebTAG). The preparation of the OBC will require the consideration of the strategic, economic, financial, management and commercial cases.

The response to the consultation, the outcome of further investigation and the consideration of the alternatives will be reported to Wiltshire Council's Cabinet, in late 2021/early 2022, when a decision will be made on how to proceed regarding the Scheme.

Once a preferred route option has been determined and formally announced, the preparation of the planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment will begin in earnest, and the pre-application stage activities can become more tightly defined.

4.3. Preliminary Design development

The next key element of the pre-application stage will be the development of the Preliminary Design for the Scheme, following selection of the preferred route option. (This is identified as 'Design Fix 3' in the current Scheme programme). This will comprise all aspects of the engineering design for the proposed highway alignment, including junctions, structures and drainage facilities. The design development will be informed by geotechnical input, traffic modelling and flood modelling, with environmental inputs involving surveys, evaluation and assessments, as described in section 4.5.

A series of engineering drawings will be prepared in draft, providing full details of the Scheme design. A separate set of drawings will be prepared for the planning application, based on the provisional list of drawings set out in section 5.1.

It will be advantageous to define key milestones in the Preliminary Design process, to enable a programme of consultation, engagement and environmental assessment to follow each key stage, as part of an iterative process towards defining the final design for application submission.

4.4. Planning Performance Agreement

An option for consideration at the pre-application stage would be the preparation of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) between Wiltshire Council (as the local highway authority and Applicant) and the local planning authority (Wiltshire Council). The PPA is intended to represent a commitment between all parties involved, to conduct open, constructive and effective dialogue in order to identify and resolve any issues during the development and consideration of the planning application for the Scheme.

The purpose of a PPA is to agree the process, tasks, programme and resources required to facilitate pre-application discussions and to determine the forthcoming planning application. A key element of the PPA would include regular pre-application discussions with the planning officers and other specialist officers of Wiltshire Council, to identify and resolve issues arising during the design development and assessment process.

Given the complexity of the proposals and the range of issues likely to be involved, there is potential that the local planning authority may not be in a position to formally determine the planning application within the statutory period of 16 weeks. The Applicant will be seeking to ensure that the application is considered in a timely manner and as expeditiously as is practicable, having regard to a timetable that would be set out in the PPA and compliance with relevant statutory procedures. The PPA would be made pursuant to Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 and Part 1 of Chapter 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

The agreement would not fetter Wiltshire Council in exercising their statutory duties as the local planning authority and would not prejudice the outcome of the planning (and any related) application(s) or the impartiality of the Council.

4.5. Consultation and engagement

4.5.1. Consulting on the route options selection process

Wiltshire Council, supported by the Atkins' Project Team, is leading the consultation and engagement strategy for the Melksham Bypass project. The Council recognises that creating successful places can only occur if all stakeholders and the local community have an active part to play in shaping, understanding and accepting the scope and scale of the proposals. In particular, the Council will seek to utilise early engagement to resolve potential contentious issues and reduce objections at a later stage.

A Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan ('the Plan') has been produced which outlines the strategy for stakeholder management and communications for the Scheme. The Plan describes how the Council will ensure that all internal and external stakeholders are informed of relevant project information and that the

development of the Scheme will meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors. (A copy of the Plan is provided in Appendix B).

4.5.2. Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder consultation and engagement will continue following the selection of the preferred route option, in accordance with the approach set out in the Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan for the project, with the aim of submitting a planning application in spring 2024.

Stakeholder consultation and engagement would be interwoven as part of the development of the project and Preliminary Design process. Consultees would include statutory agencies, local action and residents' groups, and key environmental, heritage and other interest groups. The consultees would be invited to join and contribute to the design development process and environmental assessments prepared to support the planning application. Their inputs will be invaluable in discussing key issues, constraints, opportunities, the proposed approach to assessments and potential mitigation measures.

The environmental assessment teams will engage with specialist officers of Wiltshire Council to identify key issues and discuss the approach to the assessments, particularly as part of the EIA screening and scoping stages, and following preliminary results of the assessments when impacts can be clearly identified.

Engagement activities will be required with technical stakeholders, including the principal statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and Heritage England; and it is anticipated that formal statutory consultation will be undertaken through the EIA process. There will also be a need to develop working relationships with non-statutory consultees, particularly in relation to environmental matters, in order to inform the EIA process and further design development. Landowners, business operators and residents will also be engaged in the project.

It is envisaged that a series of working groups would be set up, focussed on specific topics or work areas, to discuss key issues and impacts arising from the development, including proposed mitigation measures. It will be important to record the matters that have been agreed between parties (as part of a potential Statement of Common Ground) and to continue to work and engage on resolving issues to reduce and hopefully remove as many of the potential objections to the Scheme as possible, before the planning application is submitted.

4.5.3. Landowner engagement

The land to the east of Melksham within the broad corridors of the short list route options has been fully mapped on the project's WebGIS, with all landownerships identified. Contact has been established with the relevant landowners, initially to request access to their land to carry out ecology surveys.

Engagement with landowners will be required throughout the design development process, to discuss issues such as the formation of new access facilities, and appropriate crossing locations beneath the bypass route, to maintain access to their land and property which may be adversely affected or severed by the road alignment. For instance, discussions are already underway with the National Trust regarding potential amendments to the access to their land from the A350 to the south of Lacock, which could provide the starting point for the bypass. Discussions will also be required to inform the EIA process, particularly where the identification of mitigation measures has implications for the further acquisition of land.

Ongoing engagement will be undertaken with the aim of establishing landowner support for the bypass and to encourage them to enter into a 'road agreement' with Wiltshire Council. This would encourage eventual support for the planning application for the bypass, an agreement to allow enabling services to pass over their land and to accommodate temporary activities to support the construction process.

Ultimately, discussions with the relevant landowners will be required to seek to assemble and purchase the land required to deliver the bypass development, through negotiation and agreement. However, if agreement cannot be reached, some of the land acquisition may require compulsory purchase by Wiltshire Council and objections may be received in response to the subsequent proposed Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) from some landowners. If objections cannot be resolved, this would lead to a CPO Inquiry to enable the objections to be heard and considered by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. The CPO process is explained in more detail in section 6.2.

4.5.4. Pre-application consultation

Early engagement with the local planning authority (Wiltshire Council) will be carried out to discuss the emerging proposals and key issues which the planning authority consider should be addressed as part of the design development and assessment of the Scheme. A key objective will be to establish and confirm the proposed content of the planning application intended for submission (details are set out in chapter 5).

An important stage in the pre-application process will be the preparation and submission of a pre-application enquiry to the local planning authority, to seek their informal advice on the preliminary proposals for the bypass. This would coincide with public consultation and stakeholder engagement to present the proposed alignment of the bypass route and all associated land required for the enabling works, the construction process and mitigation measures.

With reference to the details provided on Wiltshire Council's planning applications webpage, pre-application advice provides applicants with the following benefits:

- An understanding of how Wiltshire Council's planning policies will be applied to the development proposal;
- Identifies the need for specialist input at an early stage e.g. heritage assets, transportation, trees, landscape, noise, health, ecology, contaminated land or archaeology;
- Advice regarding the preparation of proposals for formal submission, which should enable the submitted application to be handled more quickly, and more likely to result in a positive outcome; and
- Identifies any elements of the proposals that could be unacceptable and may require amending prior to formal application submission.

The Council's advice for a major application is that a pre-application submission is made at an early stage, at least 3 months before the application is formally submitted.

In accordance with the advice provided by the Council's adopted SCI, the pre-application submission will need to include sufficient detail to enable the local planning authority to provide comprehensive advice on the acceptability of the proposals. The information would include a series of drawings illustrating the proposals; and a supporting statement which will provide a development description of each element of the proposed Scheme, a summary of the route options appraisal process, consultation and engagement carried out to date, environmental impacts and preliminary results of the EIA, a high level development appraisal based on relevant planning policy and proposed mitigation measures.

A series of regular meetings will be held with the local planning authority and other specialist officers of the Council to discuss the proposals prior to the pre-application submission, to ensure all issues have been identified, discussed and addressed as far as possible.

The approach to public consultation would accord with the Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan, and is likely to involve the posting of details on the established Melksham Bypass webpage, exhibitions to present the proposals (both online and in public venues), public events to enable members of the public to discuss and ask questions about the proposals, and a series of meetings with stakeholders (focussed on specific topics or work areas) to discuss key issues and impacts arising from the development and the proposed mitigation strategy. Feedback will be requested via a questionnaire survey and the submission of written comments, which will be recorded and analysed to identify the key areas of the Scheme requiring further attention. The results of the consultation, including high level responses to the key issues raised and the ways in which the Scheme has been amended in response to comments, will be presented in a SCI, for submission with the planning application.

4.6. Preparation of EIA and supporting documents/reports

Based on the current understanding of the environmental baseline context, and the scale and extent of the Scheme route options, it is considered likely that Wiltshire Council will determine the Scheme to be EIA development. This will be confirmed at the pre-application stage through the preparation and issue of a formal request for a Screening Opinion for the Scheme under Regulation 6(2) of the EIA Regulations 2017. On the assumption that the Screening Opinion confirms a requirement for an EIA to be undertaken, the next task will be the preparation and issue of an EIA Scoping Report to Wiltshire Council. (Details regarding the content and requirements of the EIA screening, scoping and assessment stages are provided in section 2.2.4 above).

Following receipt of the EIA scoping opinion from the local planning authority, the preparation of the full environmental assessments will commence, with a view to completing an Environmental Statement for submission with the planning application. This will be an iterative process in tandem with the design development process, with any changes to the design requiring a refresh of the environmental assessments to take account of any additional impacts. Similarly, any significant impacts identified by the assessments may prompt revisions to the proposed alignment or design in order to avoid or reduce the impacts as far as possible.

Surveys, evaluation and assessment

The EIA process will be informed by a series of environmental surveys and evaluation. In terms of the ecological impact assessment, Phase 1 Habitat Surveys of the land encompassing the short list route options has already been completed, which has identified suitable habitat for a range of protected species. An extensive programme

of Phase 2 surveys will be carried out on the preferred route corridor once this is confirmed. Tree surveys will be carried out within the route of the alignment to provide details of the location, type and quality of the trees likely to be affected by the development. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) would then be prepared, to provide details of the trees to be removed, protected and retained. The results of the tree survey and AIA would inform the route alignment and Preliminary Design process, to minimise and where possible avoid the removal of trees.

The assessment of impacts on the water environment will include a Flood Risk Assessment, informed by flood modelling to provide the data required to define the exact location and span of the overbridges and underpasses. A Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment will be carried out to assess impacts on the water quality of the water bodies within the catchment of the development. Aquatic ecology surveys will be required to assess the impacts of the proposed structures in the vicinity of watercourses and water bodies. A desk-based cultural heritage assessment will be undertaken, which would identify any locations where archaeological evaluation is recommended, if the route corridor encroaches upon areas identified for their archaeological value and importance. A landscape and visual impact assessment will be carried out, involving the assembly of photomontages to present and assess the impact of the development on the local and wider landscape value of the area, which may influence the design in terms of adjustments and refinements to the horizontal and vertical alignment to reduce impacts.

A comprehensive schedule of the assessments, supporting documents/reports and drawings likely to be required for submission with the planning application, is provided in section 5.1.

Environmental Mitigation Strategy

The assessment process will lead to recommendations for potential mitigation measures, to reduce or compensate for the impacts identified. Any residual impacts likely to occur once the mitigation has been applied may lead to recommendations for further measures to be introduced. This process will need to be coordinated to ensure that the range of measures are complementary, rather than conflicting, leading to the development of an Environmental Mitigation Strategy for the Scheme. The Strategy will evolve as the assessments progress, informed by stakeholder engagement, to ensure the mitigation measures are acceptable to the range of organisations and statutory bodies that will have an interest in the development (and will ultimately be involved in assessing the submitted planning application). The removal of potential gaps in information, significant issues and objections at the pre-application stage will be particularly advantageous to reduce issues to resolve during the determination of the planning application.

4.7. Design refinement

As outlined above, the two processes of developing the Preliminary Design and preparing the environmental assessments will be aligned to ensure that the design can be amended and revised in order to avoid, reduce and remove impacts wherever possible.

Other key activities that will influence the refinement of the Scheme will include public consultation and stakeholder engagement, with design reviews to be carried out following each milestone in the engagement process. Any significant changes to the proposed alignment or design will prompt the need for further consultation and engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the public and interested parties are fully informed of the process and are given the opportunity to respond to the changes.

Once the Scheme alignment and Preliminary Design is finalised the EIA and associated reports can be concluded, enabling the planning application to be made.

4.8. Land assembly

As outlined in section 4.5.3, land ownership to the east of Melksham has already been identified and mapped within the broad swathe of land that encompasses the emerging route option.

Once the bypass route and design of the development has been finalised the assembly of the land required to deliver the Scheme (within the final development boundary) will commence in earnest. The preparation of a detailed schedule of landowners and agricultural tenants will be required (known as a Book of Reference) to identify all land within the proposed development boundary. This will be accompanied by detailed drawings to define each land parcel within the final development boundary, with a reference number allocated to each landowner within the Book of Reference.

The final development boundary will include all features forming part of the proposed Scheme, defined as (but not limited to) the following:

- vegetation clearance and enabling works;

- any temporary works;
- all necessary Public Rights of Way closures and diversions;
- the construction process (including construction access routes, compounds, equipment storage, construction materials storage, temporary waste materials/soil storage);
- the development of the full road alignment (both horizontal and vertical);
- new and amended accesses for adjacent landowners;
- structures (bridges and underpasses);
- embankments and cuttings;
- the proposed landscape scheme and planting areas;
- ecological mitigation areas;
- any noise abatement measures (such as acoustic barriers); and
- surface water drainage facilities.

As outlined previously, the assembly of the land will be achieved through negotiation and agreement with the landowners as far as possible, but in circumstances where agreement cannot be reached, this is likely to lead to compulsory purchase, the process of which is outlined in section 6.2 below.

5. Planning Application Submission

This section provides details of the required content of the planning application, comprising the plans, drawings, assessments and reports that bring together the work undertaken in the pre-application and design refinement stages.

As outlined in section 2.2.2, the planning application will be prepared by Atkins on behalf of Wiltshire Council, as the 'Applicant', and submitted to Wiltshire Council (as the local planning authority) for determination under Regulation 3 of the TCPA 1990.

5.1. Content of application

The planning application will be prepared in conformity with the policies in the adopted development plan and the emerging Local Plan, taking into account any other material considerations, which would include the NPPF and other relevant planning guidance.

Table 5.1 below provides a provisional list of the assessments and reports that would be prepared to support the forthcoming planning application, which has been informed by the requirements set out in Wiltshire Council's validation list for planning applications. Table 5.2 provides a schedule of the drawings likely to be required to submit with the planning application. The proposed content of the application will be discussed and confirmed with the local planning authority (Wiltshire Council) at an early stage in the pre-application process. An initial outline of the content of some of the key documents to be prepared, follows Table 5.1.

Table 5-1 - Provisional list of planning application documents

Document	Owner
Application Form and Ownership Certificates	Atkins – Planning
Schedule of Landowners and Agricultural Tenants (to append to Application Form)	Atkins – Planning
Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Atkins – Environment
Environmental Statement (including all associated Reports, Appendices and Figures)	Atkins – Environment
Environmental Mitigation Strategy (likely to be appended to the Environmental Statement)	Atkins – Environment
Flood Risk Assessment	Atkins – Environment

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)	Atkins – Environment
Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy (incorporating Landscape Plans)	Atkins – Environment
Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	Atkins – Planning
Materials Management Plan (MMP)	Atkins – Environment
Planning, Design and Access Statement	Atkins – Planning
Statement of Community Involvement	Atkins – Planning
Surface Water Drainage Strategy and design drawings	Atkins – Drainage
Sustainability Assessment	Atkins – Environment
Transport Assessment	Atkins – T&E
Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment	Atkins – Environment
Waste Management Plan	Atkins – Environment

Environmental Statement

The Environmental Statement will effectively report on the approach, methodology and findings of each of the assessments carried out as part of the EIA. As outlined in detail in section 2.3.4, the Environment Statement will be prepared in accordance with Regulation 18(3) of the EIA Regulations 2017, to include a description of the proposed Scheme; a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed Scheme on the environment; a description of any features of the proposed Scheme, or proposed mitigation measures, that are intended to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment; a description of the reasonable alternatives considered to the preferred route option and the main reasons for the option selected; and a non-technical summary.

Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)

The FRA will provide an assessment of all sources of potential flooding, both in terms of any increased risk of flooding as a result of the Scheme, and risks to the Scheme itself as a result of localised flooding. It will include calculations of estimated flood levels and details of flood resistance and resilience plans. The FRA will also consider surface water management and the provision of sustainable drainage measures such as swales and basins.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

This will provide a description of the development, demonstrate the need for the Scheme and how the proposals align with relevant national and local planning policies. Emerging policies will be taken into consideration including other material considerations as appropriate.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Prepared by the Project Team with support from Atkins, the final SCI will explain how the Council has engaged with the local community and other interested parties as part of the design development and environmental assessment of the Scheme. It will summarise the findings of all stages of public consultation and engagement carried out during the pre-application process, including the ways in which the Scheme has been amended or improved as a result of the feedback received.

Transport Assessment

The Transport Assessment will consider the impact of the Scheme on the surrounding highway network. The traffic impact assessment element will make use of the Wiltshire strategic model as well as local junction models.

Table 5-2 - Provisional list of planning application drawings

Drawing	Notes
Site Location Plan	To include a red line boundary to encompass the proposed road alignment and all associated works including ecology and landscape mitigation areas, earthworks, embankments, landscape planting, flood compensation areas, haul routes, construction compounds, etc
Existing Site Layout Plan	Overview drawing of existing site and surroundings

Proposed Site Layout Plan	Overview drawing of the full scheme layout, ideally including key site constraints and designations
General Arrangement drawings of highway alignment	Proposed highway layout for each section
Cross Sections of highway alignment	In locations to be agreed with the local highway authority
Plan and Profile	Long sections of highway alignment
Proposed Structures	Layouts, elevations and cross sections
Proposed Junctions	Layouts, 'street' elevations and cross sections
Public Rights of Way (PRoW)	Existing PRoWs and proposed diversions, closures, upgrades to bridleways, new sections of PRoWs/Bridleways, etc
Proposed Footway/Cycleway Detail	If applicable/proposed
Farm/Agricultural Access Details	Layout, sections, vehicle tracking details, to show how agricultural land will be accessed when the scheme is complete
Landscape and Environmental Mitigation Proposals	Layout plans to be prepared in liaison with the environmental assessment teams
Existing Utilities Plans	To include location, route and type of utilities in the vicinity of the proposed scheme
Proposed Utilities Plan	To include any proposed diversions, new and replacement utilities, etc
Lighting Design Proposals	Lighting layout, proposed lighting design and Isolux drawings
Site Clearance Plans	To include structures and vegetation clearance
Proposed Pavement Detail	Details to be confirmed (TBC)
Proposed Kerbing	Details TBC
Standard Highway Details	Details TBC
Proposed Traffic Signs and Lines	Details TBC

5.2. Preparing the application for submission

The coordination of the application will be carried out in liaison with the Wiltshire Council Project Team and Atkins environment and engineering teams. The final tasks leading to the submission of the application are summarised below:

- Atkins to complete the planning application form and the appropriate certificates of ownership and agricultural land declarations (via the online Planning Portal facility). A separate schedule of the relevant landowners and tenants will be produced to submit with the application.
- Atkins' Planning Team to review the draft 'Application Pack', comprising the final Scheme drawings, Environmental Statement and supporting documents/reports, to ensure consistency in project referencing and to check for any conflicting details.
- Wiltshire Council Project Team to review the full Application Pack and provide final comments.
- Atkins to complete final amendments to the Scheme drawings, Environmental Statement and supporting documents/reports.
- Atkins to upload all documents and drawings to the Planning Portal and submit the application.
- Atkins to notify all landowners and tenants via letter of the submission of the application.
- Wiltshire Council Project Team to complete payment of the application fee on behalf of the Applicant.
- Atkins to assist the local planning authority with any queries following application submission, to secure the formal validation of the application and assignment to a Planning Case Officer.

6. Post-submission stage

6.1. Determination of planning application

Once the application has been validated by the local planning authority, the determination process will commence with a statutory consultation organised and managed by the Planning Case Officer. Notification that the application has been received and registered by the local planning authority will be distributed to a number of statutory bodies, other relevant organisations and officers of the Council, including all residents and occupiers of properties neighbouring the 'red line' application boundary of the Scheme. Given the Project Team will have gathered details of the landowners and tenants within and adjacent to the red line boundary, it is envisaged that the Planning Case Officer may refer to this to provide the local planning authority's formal notification of the application.

The determination period for the planning application would be 16 weeks, which is the statutory timeframe for major development proposals accompanied by an Environmental Statement. At the start of the determination process, the statutory consultation period is normally 5 weeks. However, in practice, comments are likely to be received by the Planning Case Officer throughout the determination process and can often be received very close to the target decision date. This will be mitigated by adopting a proactive approach to engaging with the local planning authority and the main consultees, in line with the procedures set out in the PPA. It is recommended that the Project Team, supported by Atkins, establishes contact with the main consultees with a view to presenting the details of the submitted proposals and discussing any objections and key issues arising. It is envisaged the meetings would be the continuation of discussions carried out with the same consultees at the pre-application stage, in order to provide continuity during the determination process.

The consultation comments received will be uploaded to the application webpage by the planning authority throughout the application process. The webpage will be regularly monitored to pick up and review the comments received and agree actions with the Planning Case Officer and Wiltshire Council Project Team. The PPA would include a provision for the Planning Case Officer to keep abreast of the comments received and to forward any significant comments directly to the Atkins' Planning Team to action. The provision of responses would need to be discussed and agreed with the Wiltshire Council Project Team and may require the drafting of additional information or assessment for submission to the Planning Case Officer. Discussions with the relevant organisation(s) will be encouraged, to resolve issues and agree any additional details required.

The culmination of the application process will be the presentation of the application at the relevant Planning Committee (and potentially full Cabinet, given the significance of the proposals). The Planning Case Officer will draft a report for presentation to Committee, together with a list of proposed planning conditions. We will request the opportunity to review the draft conditions prior to their inclusion within the Committee report, to check for any potential issues or adverse programme implications (for instance, the wording of the pre-commencement conditions will need to be checked to ensure they can be addressed and implemented within programme).

If the Committee resolves to approve the application, the Planning Case Officer will issue the Decision Notice as a conditional approval, subject to the submission of applications to approve details reserved by conditions attached to the Decision Notice. (Section 6.3 provides brief details of the planning conditions process).

Following receipt of the Decision Notice (planning permission) the CPO can be launched, the process of which is summarised in the section below.

6.2. Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

As outlined in sections 4.5.3 and 4.8, discussions will be required with the relevant landowners to seek to purchase the land required to deliver the Scheme through negotiation and agreement. However, as a last resort, some of the land may need to be acquired through compulsory purchase by Wiltshire Council and objections may be received in response to the subsequent proposed Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) from some landowners. If objections cannot be resolved, this would lead to a CPO Inquiry to enable the objections to be heard and considered by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

The main stages of the CPO process are set out below. The duration of the CPO process would be approximately 12 months, dependent on the length and complexity of the CPO Inquiry.

- Obtain Cabinet approval (from Wiltshire Council) for CPO Powers
- Check and revise CPO boundaries following any design or mitigation land revisions
- Confirm land purchase boundaries, titles/easements

- Produce CPO Package - Draft the Orders, prepare CPO Schedule and Map, Statement of Reasons
- Prepare written notices to landowners
- Serve CPO Notices to landowners and launch CPO (following receipt of planning permission)
- Objections received (confirmation of CPO Inquiry by PINS)
- Negotiations with landowners
- Consideration of objections by PINS
- PINS' confirmation that a CPO Inquiry is required
- CPO Inquiry:
 - Planning Inspectorate confirms Inquiry procedures
 - Statements of Case prepared (potential for separate Planning and CPO statements)
 - Date of Inquiry received from Planning Inspectorate
 - Preparation and submission of Evidence for Inquiry
 - Comments/rebuttals on submitted Evidence
 - CPO (and Planning) Inquiry Hearings
 - Inspectors Report received
 - Secretary of State's Decision received
 - Judicial Review Period
- Confirmation of Compulsory Purchase Order
- CPO Objection Period
- Confirm and Publish Orders
- Possession of land
- Compensation (a right to compensation following the taking of possession of land)

Once the CPO is confirmed and Orders published, the next stage will be to proceed with the discharge of planning conditions, to enable construction to commence.

6.3. Planning Conditions

As outlined in section 6.1, a series of planning conditions will be attached to the Decision Notice, requiring the submission of applications to the local planning authority to approve the details required to proceed with the development. These are likely to include (but not limited to), the following:

- Archaeology Mitigation Strategy
- Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Construction Phasing Plan
- Construction Method Statement (CMS)
- Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Contaminated Land desk-based assessment and mitigation strategy (if not included in detail within the planning application)
- Detailed design for Structures
- Flood compensation measures (if not included in detail within the planning application)
- Full Technical Design Details (based on the detailed design of the highway)
- Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
- Landscape Scheme and planting schedule
- Lighting Strategy
- Noise Mitigation Strategy (potential noise modelling and noise abatement measures)
- Protection of retained trees and other vegetation during the construction period
- Surface Water Drainage Strategy and detailed design of drainage facilities

In terms of the process required to discharge the conditions, this would form part of the PPA, to ensure an expedient process is adopted for the preparation, submission, consideration and determination of the

applications, to meet programme requirements. Each application would be subject to statutory consultation, with comments invited from relevant consultees. The priority will be to focus on the discharge of the pre-commencement conditions, to enable the construction process to start.

The various steps in the application process are outlined as follows:

- Prepare material (such as drawings, assessments, reports) to satisfy the wording of the conditions;
- Submit application(s) to the local planning authority for approval;
- Respond to any consultation comments received and submit any additional information to support the application(s) to the Planning Case Officer; and
- Determination of application(s) by local planning authority (8 weeks is the statutory period).

6.4. Planning Strategy Review

This Planning Strategy is a live document and will continue to be regularly reviewed to refine the strategic approach and reflect changes as a result of further information, external influences and project reviews.

7. Other Environmental Consents

As well as seeking planning permission and a CPO for the proposed Scheme, further environmental consents will be required to support the development. For instance, where main rivers are crossed, a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) will be required from the Environment Agency. Likewise, the network of Public Rights of Way along the highway alignment will require diversions or closure/stopping up. This will be covered by the planning application, but design changes and construction work will be closely monitored to ensure the further temporary or permanent stopping up or diversion notices are established well in advance of their requirements.

Examples of potential consents are provided below:

- Natural England:
 - Protected Species Licenses (to agree the formal measures to mitigate impacts on bats, badgers, great crested newts, etc)
- Environment Agency:
 - Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP)
 - Water discharge permit
 - Waste exemptions and permits for storage, use, treatment and disposal
 - Waste operation permit
 - Removal of invasive species
 - Waste Carrier Licence
 - Hazardous Waste removal permit
- Local authority:
 - Ordinary Watercourse Consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act (1991) for the erection or alteration of any culverts or other obstructions to the flow of an ordinary watercourse.
 - Consent under Section 61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, for prior approval of details to manage noise on-site during the construction phase.
 - Temporary Roads Order (TRO) for the temporary diversion of PRowS (to be renewed every 6 months, up to a maximum of 12 months).

Appendices



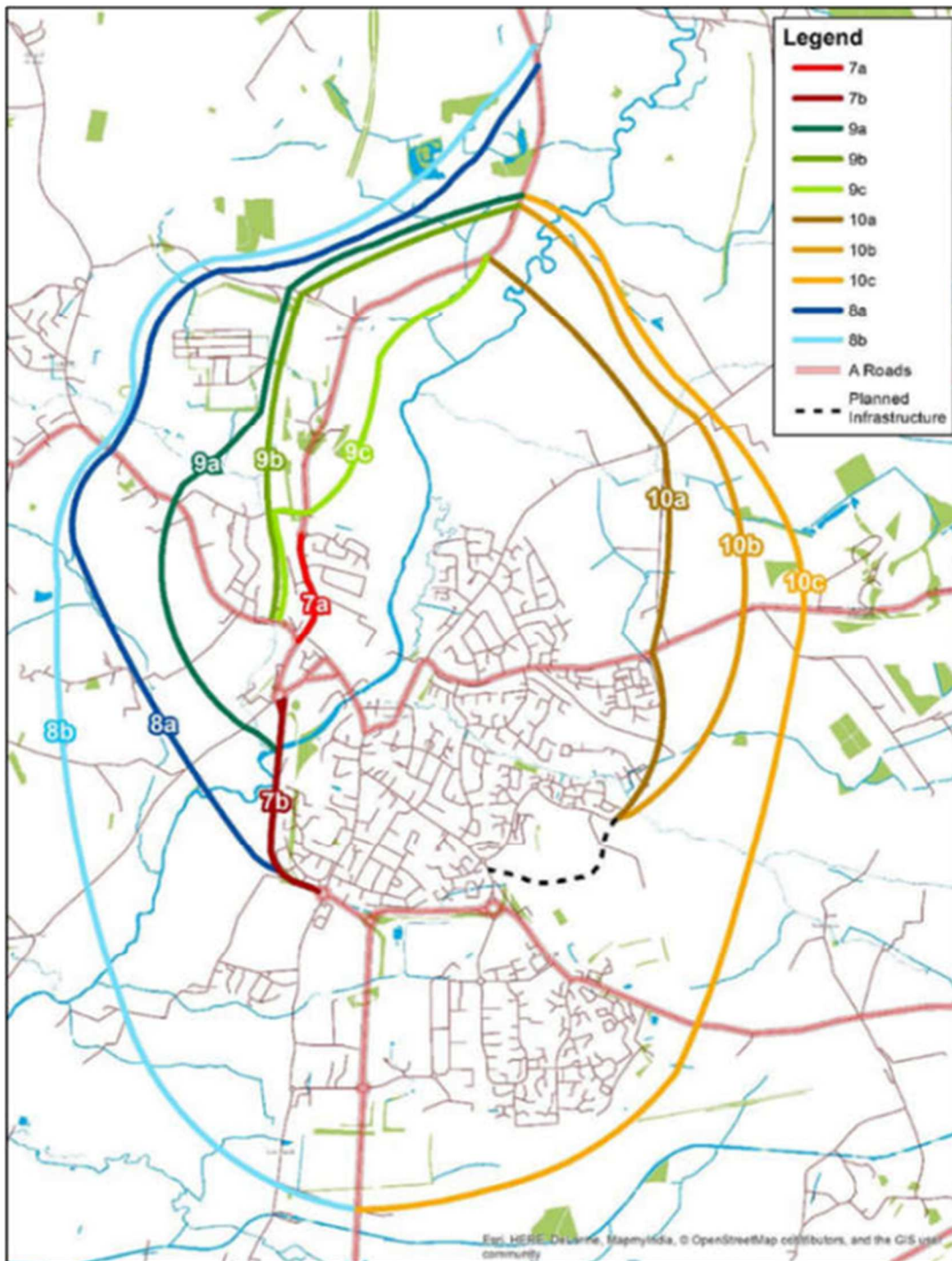
Appendix A. Summary of route options development

Long list route options

A desk-based appraisal and sifting exercise of 10 highway route options located to the east and west of Melksham was undertaken in 2020 (Figure 4.1). Each route corridor was assessed against a series of framework criteria, to consider potential impacts on existing environmental constraints, construction deliverability, cost and planning conflicts (policy designations, existing land uses and current/future development sites). A WebGIS system was established to plot site constraints and identify how each route option would be impacted.

The 10 long list route options were included as part of a public consultation exercise launched by Wiltshire Council in November 2020. This provided the opportunity for members of the public, town and parish councils, the Melksham Area Board and other local organisations to comment on the wider transport scheme and the options being considered. Statutory bodies including the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Highways Agency, were also invited to comment as part of the consultation.

Figure A-1 - Long-list route options



The following options formed part of the consultation:

- Workplace parking levy (Option 1)
- Road user pricing (Option 2)
- Heavy goods vehicle restrictions (Option 3)
- Rail service improvements (Option 4)
- Bus service improvements (Option 5)
- Walking and cycling improvements (Option 6)
- Improvements to the existing A350 (Route Options 7a, 7b and 7c)
- Short bypass (Route Options 8a, 9a, 9b, 9c, 10a and 10b)
- Long bypass (Route Options 8b, 10c and 10d)

This was the initial consultation on the potential options for the transport scheme, and it was considered important that the widest range of options should be consulted on at this preliminary stage.

The aims of the non-statutory consultation were to:

- successfully engage with stakeholders affected by or interested in the scheme;
- engage with potentially affected landowners;
- encourage involvement from stakeholders and build strong open relationships;
- raise awareness of the scheme and understanding for the need to improve the A350;
- inform about the option assessment process;
- understand stakeholder concerns, issues and suggestions;
- receive feedback on the options to allow us to develop the scheme further; and
- prepare for the statutory consultation phases.

It should be noted that the consultation was not a public 'vote' for the most popular route or option. The information collected through the consultation process has been used to inform the assessment of the options in more detail which has helped to identify a short list of route options for further assessment and informal consultation. The views of organisations with specialist knowledge of the area have been particularly important in helping to refine and assess the proposals. The results of the consultation have indicated an emerging preference for a bypass to the east of Melksham.

Short list route options

The initial, high-level assessment of the 10 long list route options in relation to environmental impacts, planning constraints, potential journey time savings, construction deliverability and cost, demonstrated that the routes to the east of Melksham performed best. The assessment, supported by the consultation responses, concluded that 5 options should be short-listed for further development and investigation as shown in Figure 4.2.

Option 1 (coloured blue on Figure 4.2) included two variations, comprising a partial bypass to form a new link between the A350 and A3102, connecting with the existing network at Eastern Way on the eastern edge of Melksham. This would join Spa Road at the southern end and utilise a new link between Eastern Way and Spa Road associated with a current housing development.

Option 2 (coloured red on the Figure 4.2) included three variations, comprising a full bypass option connecting the A350 north of Melksham to the A350 south of Melksham – a route of approximately 5 miles. This would cross Lower Woodrow Road, the A3102 at Sandridge Hill, the A365 east of Bowerhill and join the A350 to the south of Bowerhill and Hampton Business Park.

The 5 short list route options were taken forward for further design development, in order to refine the alignments to avoid key features along the route corridors as far as possible, including residential properties, farm buildings, local equestrian businesses, woodland, ponds, areas of archaeological importance and utility infrastructure. Current and future development sites were also considered, to ensure the route corridors avoided sites that were subject to a current planning application, or recently received planning permission, or under construction. The planning constraints review included potential site allocations emerging through the Local Plan Review process.

Each highway alignment was further refined to produce either an intermediate relief road to join the existing highway at the junction of Eastern Way and the A3102 (Option 1) or a compliant full bypass (Option 2),

including initial highways design, junction layouts, bridge structures and surface water drainage. The key element was to incorporate the need for future dualling of the preferred solution. The options were assessed against a series of criteria including flood risk, environmental impacts, traffic modelling, economic appraisal, value engineering and planning constraints. The Design Strategy Record provides further details regarding the design development process to date, and the high-level assessment is set out in the draft Options Assessment Report (OAR) prepared by Atkins in April 2021.

Figure A-2 - Short-list route options

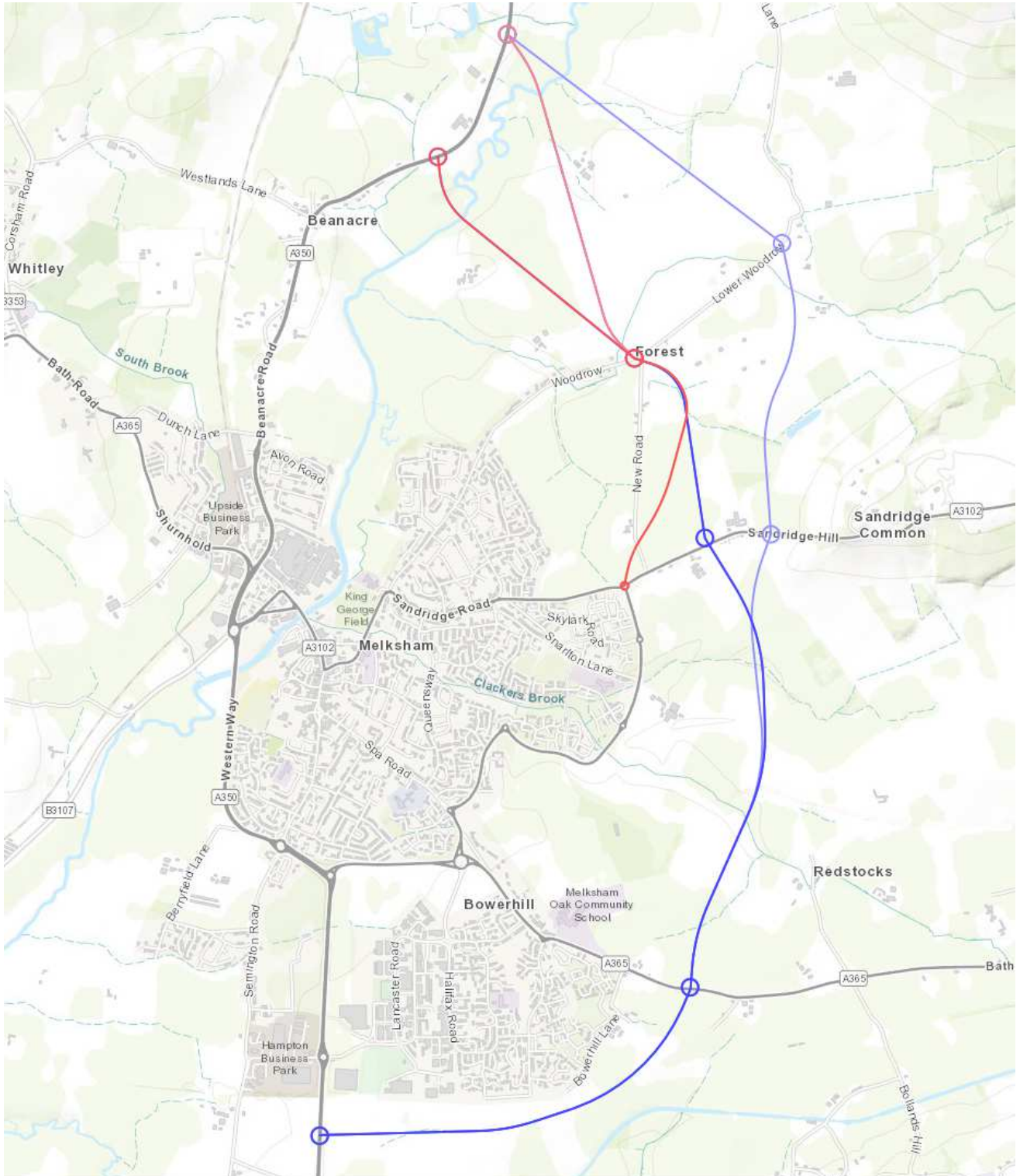
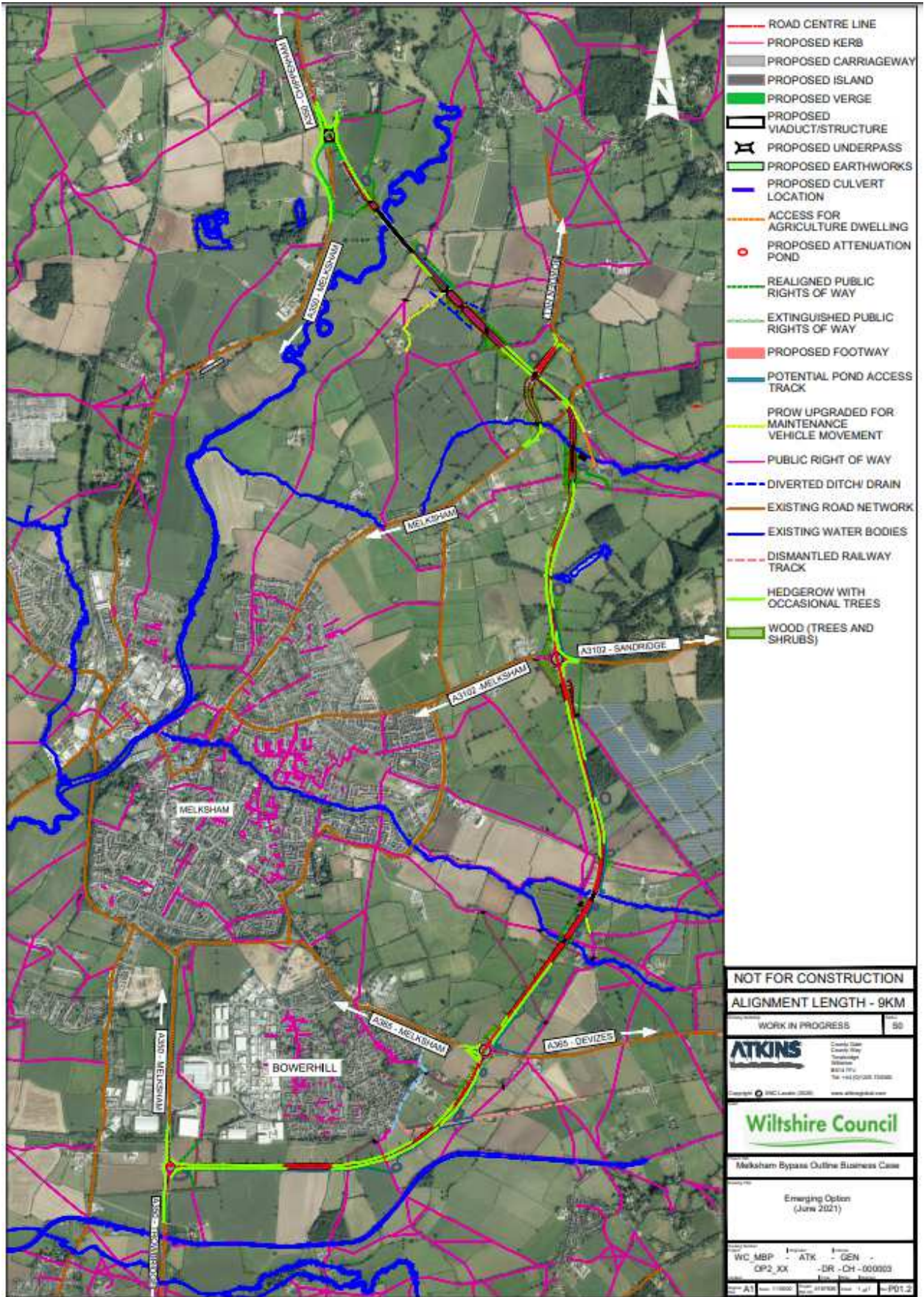


Figure A-3 – Emerging option



Appendix B. Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan

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