

**Melksham Neighbourhood Plan**

# **Green Infrastructure Evidence Base Report**

**Submission Version**

**V6 October 2020**

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# 1 Introduction

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a term used to cover many different green spaces such as parks and open spaces, or routes, together with 'blue' elements such as the River Avon and its banks.

The Melksham Neighbourhood Area's Green Infrastructure network is made up of lots of different features including open spaces, private gardens, allotments and parks, together with the many public footpaths that span the area.

This Green Infrastructure network has many and varied benefits for the environment, biodiversity and for people; it can help contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities and it can inform a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, and can inform where priorities should be for protection and enhancement.

## Objectives of this report:

- To provide a source of information and evidence on existing GI assets as part of the Neighbourhood Plan as well as for planners, landowners and developers.
- To identify areas and potential project areas to enhance the Green Infrastructure of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Following this introduction, **Part 2** of this report sets out a detailed overview of the existing GI of the Joint Plan area. **Part 3** sets out the key priorities and assets to retain and enhance, as well as opportunities to extend the GI network.

## Policy context

The National Planning Policy Framework defines green infrastructure as: "A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities" (National Planning Policy Framework, 2019, p.67).

In the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), 'Green Infrastructure' is used to characterise spaces such as parks and gardens, amenity green space, urban green spaces, woodland, downland and meadow, wetlands, open and running water, quarries, green corridors (including rivers and canals), allotments, cemeteries and churchyards. GI is described as providing socio-economic and cultural benefits which underpin community health and wellbeing (para. 6.88, p.269). The key relevant policies in the Core Strategy are:

- **Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity**  
Sets out parameters for the protection and enhancement of local biodiversity and wildlife sites.
- **Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure**  
Sets the context for the protection and enhancement of the existing GI network in Melksham, as well as the requirement for development to provide new GI and links to the existing network.
- **Core Policy 53: Wiltshire's Canals**  
Sets out the support in principle of the restoration of and reconstruction of the Wilts and Berks canal.

**Core Policy 16: Melksham Link Project** gives more detail on the parameters for development of the Wilts and Berks Canal restoration project (see 'Melksham Link Project' below).

## Part 2 Existing Green Infrastructure

The Melksham Neighbourhood area benefits from a wide range of green assets that make up the local level Green Infrastructure (GI). This section sets out the existing assets in the area, including open spaces, sustainable transport and active travel routes, biodiversity, woodland and trees.

### 2.1 Open Spaces

In the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Open Space is defined as “all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity” (NPPF 2019, p.69). In this section of the report, open space in Melksham is generally defined as those green spaces having recreational value and being freely accessible to the public (the exception to this is allotments and education grounds, which are generally not freely accessible, but are important components of open space provision). Areas of water are addressed in other parts of this report.

Public Open Spaces in the joint Plan Area are managed and maintained by a variety of different stakeholders such as both the Town and Parish Councils, Wiltshire Council, Management Companies of new housing development, social housing providers and contractors. In addition, there are several volunteer groups that maintain public open space for the enjoyment of all, for example BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group), Friends of Shurnhold Fields, Friends of Brunswick Park, Primrose Nature Area, and Conigre Mead Nature Reserve. There are also pockets of bulb and tree planting by local residents. There is also a "Bloom in Melksham" group who help with projects within the town towards the Melksham entry into the RHS South West in Bloom annual competition winning gold on several times in recent years. Regular litter picks by volunteers take place throughout the community all year round.

Table 1 and Map 1 identify open spaces in the Neighbourhood Area. This draws on work at the neighbourhood level as part of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, from the Wiltshire Council Leisure and Recreation Development Plan Document (2009)<sup>1</sup>, from the Wiltshire Open Space and Play Area Study 2016<sup>2</sup> and Wiltshire Council's emerging Green Infrastructure and Open Space Study, and from data from Open Street Map and Ordnance Survey websites. The Open Spaces are identified on the below Open Spaces Maps.

The spaces come under the following typologies (definitions extracted from Wiltshire Open Space and Play Area Study 2016<sup>3</sup> and Wiltshire Council's emerging Green Infrastructure and Open Space Study):

- Accessible Natural Green Space
- Allotments
- Amenity Green Space
- Churchyards and cemeteries
- Education
- Natural Green Space (Limited Access)
- Outdoor Sport (Fixed)
- Outdoor Sport (Pitches)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/west-wiltshire-leisure-and-recreation-development-plan-document-january-2009.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-open-space-study-draft.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-open-space-study-draft.pdf>

- Outdoor Sport (Private)
- Park and Recreation Ground
- Play Space (Children and Youth)

Map 1 and Table 1 give further detail on key open spaces in the Neighbourhood Area. A network of Amenity Green Space has been identified by both Wiltshire Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (identified in pale pink on Map 1). This network consists of a variety of green areas including green verges and more extensive open areas. The more extensive or notable areas have been labelled on Map 1, and where appropriate, community comments are included in Table 1.

Map 1: Green Infrastructure Assets & Priorities: Open Spaces Map

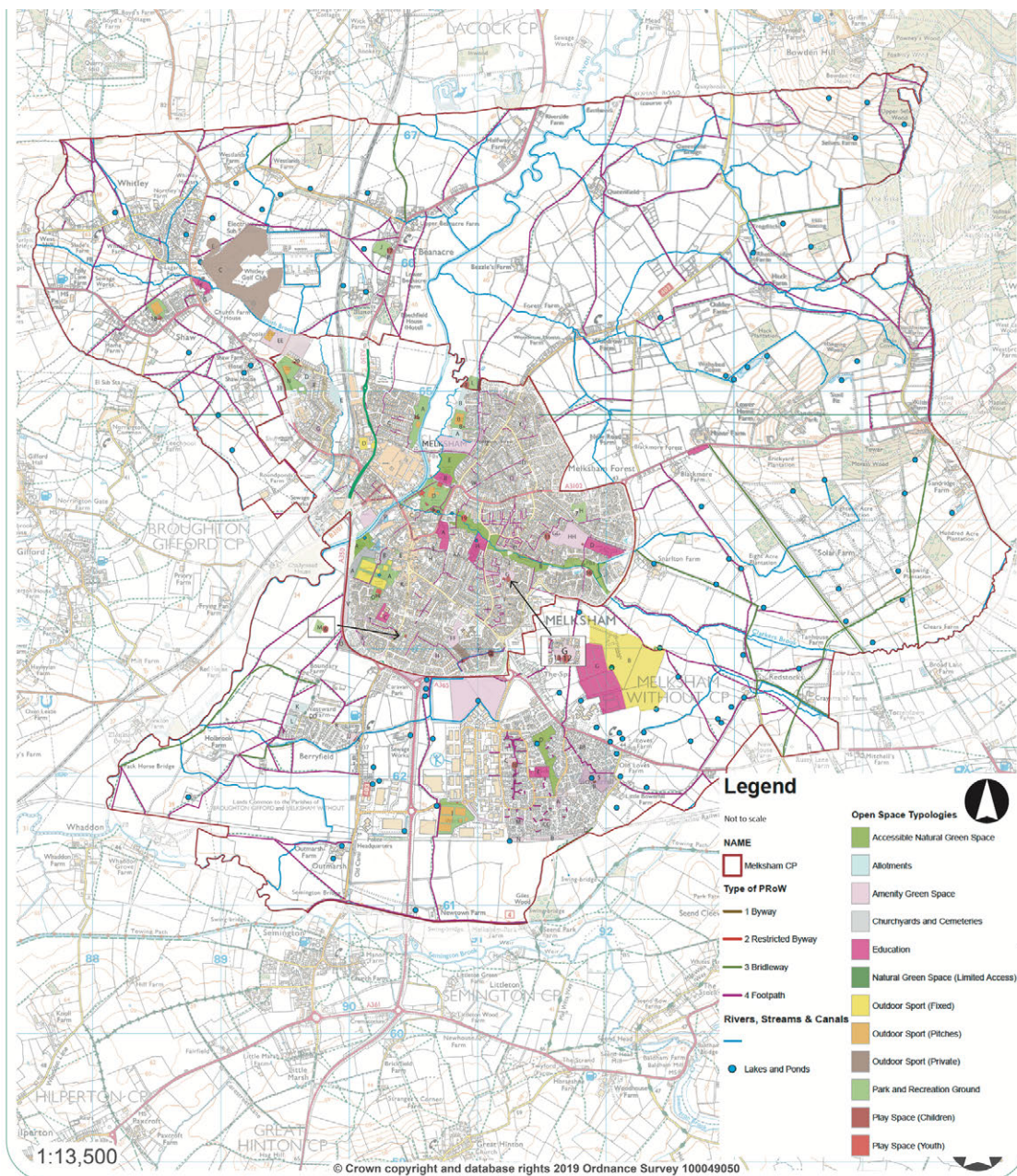


Table 1. GI Assets & Priorities: Open Spaces Map in Melksham Joint NP Area

**Spaces in bold are in the Local Green Space long list (see 'Potential Local Green Spaces' below)**

ID	Site Name	Typology	Notes & Green Infrastructure Suggestions
<b>A</b>	<b>Conigre Mead Nature Area</b>	<b>Accessible Natural Green Space</b>	<b>Maintained by a group of volunteers, supported by the WWT</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Clackers Brook Corridor</b>	<b>Accessible Natural Green Space</b>	<b>This green corridor runs either side of Clackers Brook, which runs from east to west and joins the Avon at the town bridge. The land is variously owned by Wiltshire Council, Brookbank and Selwood Housing.</b>
C	Primrose Drive Nature Area	Accessible Natural Green Space	Part of Clackers Brook green space. Local residents maintain this area.  Forms part of the green corridor through the centre of Melksham running along the Clackers Brook
<b>D</b>	<b>Green space behind Wellington Drive</b>	<b>Accessible natural green space</b>	<b>Large sloping field leading up to the original Bower.</b>  <b>Unsuccessful application was made to designate this space as a Village Green.</b>  <b>Useful recreation space, soon to have a new mowing regime to encourage wild flowers</b>
E	Riverside open space near Kings Park Primary School	Accessible natural green space	
A	Awdry Allotments	Allotments	15 whole plots, of which 8 are split into half plots. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
B	Methuen Allotments	Allotments	42 allotment plots, of which 10 are split into half plots. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
C	Portman Road Allotment	Allotments	4 allotment plots. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
D	Addison Road Allotments	Allotments	11 allotment plots. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
E	Southbrook Allotments	Allotments	39 allotments of which 16 are split into half plots. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
F	Wiltshire Crescent Allotment	Allotments	4 whole plots, of which 1 is split into 2 halves. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
G	Dorset Crescent Allotment	Allotments	3 whole plots, of which 1 is split into 2 halves. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
H	Milton Avenue Allotment	Allotments	4 allotment plots. Maintained by the Town Council caretaking team.
I	Whitley Allotments	Allotments	4-6 private allotments accessed currently via Whitley farm, but could be via Middle Lane should access arrangements change
J	Bowerhill Allotments	Allotments	6 private allotments



K	Berryfield Briansfield	Allotments	32 plots and 4 quarter plots. New allotment site from Sept 2011.  Has formal/ business tenancy. MWPC have legal agreement but first refusal. Community orchard in area. Community Wiltshire heritage apple trees. Has a car park.
L	Berryfield	Allotments	34 half plots, 1 whole plot and 1 quarter plot, old established site. Has formal/ business tenancy. MWPC have legal agreement but no first refusal. Community asset.
A	Blenheim Park, Bowerhill	Amenity green space	Has historical importance as it is the green in front of two houses. One of the houses was where the officer commanding RAF Melksham lived. Believed to be owned by Selwood Housing. Registered as a village green by MWPC.
B	'Green bumps' by Brabazon Way, Bowerhill  AKA Area from Bader Park to Blenheim Park	Amenity green space	Provides a green corridor along Brabazon Way between Bowerhill Estate and the open countryside.  This is the open space that runs along the back of St Athan Close. It is away from the traffic so would be a safe place for children to play. It is an open space for residents from the social housing in Blenheim Park.
C	Kestrel Court	Park and Recreation Ground	Play area, MUGA and green space owned by Wiltshire Council but leased to MWPC to maintain.
D	Green behind Locking Close Bowerhill	Amenity green space	This is a small, flat open space that has a footpath connecting Locking Close to Bowerhill Lane and the pedestrian access route to the canal (bridle way and picnic area)
E	Verges	Amenity green space	
F	Campion Drive	Amenity green space	
G	Roundponds	Amenity green space	Is in the centre of housing areas and provide dog walking and space for children to play.
H	Sarum Avenue	Amenity green space	Used as an informal play area by children. Gives an open space feel to the area and it's in the middle of the community area. Good open space, could take significant tree-planting.
I	Queensway	Amenity green space	Part of the Clackers Brook Green corridor
J	Dorset Crescent	Amenity green space	
K	Spiritualist Gardens	Amenity green space	Behind the old spiritualist and Quaker Church in King Street. Maintained by Melksham in Bloom.  Subject to on going negotiations between Town and Trustees. The Town Council has been asked to take this area over
L	Beaufort Close to Kestrel Court (Bowerhill)	Amenity green space	This is the open space in the centre of Bowerhill that provides space for nearby children to play safely away from the traffic. This is linked to the Kestrel Court Play Area
M	Duxford Close- Bader Park (Bowerhill)	Amenity green space	This is a small area of open space between Duxford Close and Bader Park and provides a safe area for children to play.

N	Rear of Duxford Close (Bowerhill)	Amenity green space	It is an area that is used for dog walking. BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group) have planted trees to hide the view of Gompels warehouse in the neighbouring industrial estate.
O	Mills Road	Amenity green space	Informal Play Space in housing development with small back gardens
P	Riverside Walk	Amenity green space	
Q	The Crays	Amenity green space	Informal green space- Childrens Play area. St Andrews Church used to hold Easter service there and walk to church.
R	Triangle piece of land on entrance to Berryfield Lane	Amenity green space	Used by dog walkers. Planted with bulbs and gives an open feel to the area. 'CPRE' best kept village judges talked about open park feel on entering area.
S	Thackeray Crescent	Amenity green space	Informal green space
T	Hazelwood/ St Michaels (Town)	Amenity green space	Used for football and children's play. Access to Aloeric School.
U	Old Berryfield Lane	Amenity green space	Copse area off A350. Informal green space.
V	Off Western Way opposite Hornbeam Crescent (Town)	Amenity green space	Thick copse of trees, really more like a linear wood with a well-trodden path. A favourite dog walk, and provides an alternative pedestrian route to the cemetery. Also a good screen for the houses from the A350.
W	Fuller's Close	Amenity green space	
X	Greenwood Road / Hornbeam Crescent	Amenity green space	
Y	Crescent Road	Amenity green space	
Z	Awdry Avenue	Amenity green space	
AA	Rowley Place	Amenity green space	Grass area with mature trees
BB	Belvedere Road	Amenity green space	
CC	Barnes Wallis Close	Amenity green space	

DD	Padfield Gardens, Berryfield		
EE	Shurnhold Fields (ex George Ward School Playing Fields)	Amenity Green Space	Owned by Melksham Without Parish Council and administered by a joint steering group committee of the Town and Parish. Currently being developed into a mini country park. The day to day work is carried out by an enthusiastic group of locals, the Friends of Shurnhold Fields.  Unsuccessful application was made to designate this space as a Village Green.
FF	Spring Meadows Playing Field & Burnett Close Play Area	Amenity green space	The playing field is used by children for playing various games and has adjacent changing room facilities and play area. Field is also used for dog walkers.  Play areas built when the area was developed for housing.
GG	Forresters Park	Amenity green space	Formal and informal play space. All play equipment now removed. Owned by MTC. Query that it needs designation because it is already designated as Field in Trust (Diamond Jubilee 2012).  A Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust park. Designated as Field in Trust Green space no play equipment Owned by MTC
HH	Cranesbill Road	Amenity green space	Play Area MUGA  Managed by Brookbank as part of the new housing development
II	Hornchurch road play area	Park and Recreation Ground	Large field, MUGA and play area. This is the only public open space for the residents of the East of Bowerhill.  MUGA provided and managed by MWPC Play area owned and managed by MWPC Field owned by Wiltshire Council Mown by MWPC to create amenity space and wild flowers.
JJ	Berryfield Play Area & Green Space	Amenity green space	Green space owned by Wiltshire Council but leased to MWPC to maintain. Contains play area and large green space with mature trees  Community asset. has Teen shelter and half MUGA. Whole community involved in events. Site of temporary village hall, and part of the car park area is owned by Selwood Housing.  This whole area forms the route of the proposed Wilts and Berks Canal extension.
A	Melksham Cemetery	Churchyard and cemeteries	The town cemetery and closed churchyard are maintained by the Town Council caretaking team. As the cemetery grass is cut monthly by Wiltshire Council, the caretaking team have taken over the weekly maintenance of this area.
B	St Michael's Churchyard	Churchyard and cemeteries	
C	Ebenezer Baptist Churchyard	Churchyard and cemeteries	



D	St Andrew's Churchyard	Churchyard and cemeteries	
E	Gospel John 316 Cemetery	Churchyard and cemeteries	
F	St Barnabas Church Cemetery	Churchyard and cemeteries	
G	Christ Church Shaw Cemetery	Churchyard and cemeteries	
A	Manor CofE Primary School	Education	Academy: White Horse Federation
B	River Mead School	Education	Academy: The Mead Academy Trust
C	Aloeric Primary School	Education	Academy: Pickwick Academy Trust
D	Forest & Sandridge C.E. Primary School	Education	Academy: The White Horse Foundation
E	Shaw CofE Primary School	Education	Academy: The White Horse Foundation
F	Bowerhill Primary School	Education	Academy: The White Horse Foundation
G	Melksham Oak Community School	Education	Academy: The White Horse Foundation
H	South of Clackers Brook	Education	
A	Melksham House	Outdoor sports – variety of typologies	<p>Rugby and cricket pitches, tennis courts. Alongside the Melksham Cricket Club and Melksham Tennis Club facilities, the site has planning permission to be developed into a Community Campus encompassing swimming pool, gym, sports hall, library, cafe etc (latest update here: <a href="http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/community-environment-melksham-community-campus">http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/community-environment-melksham-community-campus</a>).</p> <p><b>Rugby pitch Informal recreation area. In the middle of Town.</b></p> <p><b>Pond in grounds – wildlife rich. Could be improved, scruffy at present</b></p>
B	The Oakfield Stadium	Outdoor sports	<p>Home of Melksham Football &amp; Rugby Club (inc. football and rugby for 3 years and up, and meeting hall, club houses, shortmat bowls)</p> <p>Extensive facility, with four rugby pitches and 15 football pitches.</p>
C	Whitley Golf Club – private business	Outdoor sports (private)	9 hole golf course
D	Spencer's Sports Club	Outdoor sports (fixed)	Privately owned sports and Social club. Green Bowls

E	Whitley Cricket Pitch	Outdoor Sports (private)	Privately owned, access via golf club car park
A	Avon Road	Park & Recreation Ground	Small children's play area (no.15 below) Large green space bordering the River Avon.
B	Awdry Avenue Playing Field	Park and Recreation Ground	Goal posts  Large field alongside the community centre is in the centre of housing areas and provide dog walking. Gives open feel. Very small enclosed children's play area. Green space maintained by MTC.
C	Queen Mary's Garden	Park and Recreation Ground	Small ornamental garden at bottom of King George V 2 benches to sit in.
D	King George V Playing Field	Park and Recreation Ground	Fields in Trust site, The Town Council is negotiating with Wiltshire Council to take over the Trusteeship of this area. To all intents and purposes the Town Council maintain the area and continue to invest with the aim of applying for green flag status when the park improvements are finished. It is intended to bring the grass cutting inhouse.  Outdoor Gym Splashpad Skatepark MUGA
E	Prince of Wales Garden	Park and Recreation Ground	Small garden in Church Street seats and planted area
F	Primrose Play Area Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Small play area for under 5's larger play builder equipment outside the fenced area. Green space maintained by MTC.
G	Dorset Play Area Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Green area fenced off for recreation use. Known locally as '6 Swings'. Play area needs refurbishment. Green space maintained by MTC.
H	Skylark Play Area	Park and Recreation Ground	Open space within a newly developed housing area. Managed by Greensquare.
I	Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Sports Field (Bowerhill Sports Field)  Also known locally as Christie Miller Fields	Park and Recreation Ground (plus other typologies)	Contains football pitches and a pavilion  Field and pavilion owned and managed by MWPC  Application was made to make this space a Village Green, but this was withdrawn by MWPC to allow new Portal Road to go through one end section, and community asset transfer of remainder which was made into a Field in Trust (Diamond Jubilee Field) in 2012.

J	<b>Beanacre Community Park</b>	<b>Park and Recreation Ground</b>	<p>Play area and large field owned by the Diocese of Salisbury and managed by St Barnabas Church. It is used for cricket and community events.</p> <p>It is also used to exercise dogs. Has a wild flower meadow and MWPC lease land to run a play area.</p> <p>Melksham Without Parish Council lease an area of land and installed a play area in 2006 with a local community group called Beanacre Matters and still maintain it.</p>
K	Shaw Play Area	Park and Recreation Ground	<p>Play area MUGA and large field with football pitch</p> <p>Play area managed by MWPC Pitches managed by Village Hall Committee</p>
L	Methuen Playing Field	Park and Recreation Ground	<p>BMX track Leased by Melksham Town Council Large green space with well maintained play equipment</p>
M	Lewington Close	Park and Recreation Ground	Small play area owned by Melksham Town Council built by the developers of the new housing and MTC took over the maintenance of the site
N	Dunch Lane	Park and Recreation Ground	Small play area for younger children. Now adjacent to the bigger play area. Green space maintained by MTC.
O	<b>Hazlewood Road / Brunswick Park</b>	<b>Park and Recreation Ground</b>	<p>Play area for wide area including Kenilworth estate. Close to houses and access to town for pedestrians.</p> <p>Well maintained play area with support from the local community who have recently helped to refurb this area. Close to houses and access to town for pedestrians. Green space maintained by MTC.</p>
1	Burnet Close	Play space (children & youth)	
2	Speedwell / Spring Meadows	Play space (children & youth)	Campion Drive Melksham
3	Methuen Play Area and BMX Track	Play space (children & youth)	
4	Berryfield Play Area & Green Space	Play space (children & youth)	
5	Hornchurch Road play area	Play space (children & youth)	Copse in north west corner
6	Lewington Close	Play space (children & youth)	
7	<b>Skylark Play Area</b>	<b>Play space (children &amp; youth)</b>	<p>Open space within a newly developed housing area which is used by the local community area on a daily basis. Hedgerows provide habitat for nesting birds of different species. Large established trees that pre-date the housing development. St Andrew Church runs three fun days per year on this piece of land for the whole community.</p>
8	Awdry Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	MTC maintains play equipment.

9	King George V	Play space (children & youth)	MUGA – this space is not open access like others listed here, and must be booked for use through the school.
10	Kestrel Court Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	
11	Cranesbill Park Play Area MUGA	Play space (children & youth)	
12	Primrose Drive Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	MTC maintains play equipment.
13	Dorset Crescent Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	MTC maintains play equipment.
14	Hazlewood Road / Brunswick Park MUGA	Play space (children & youth)	MTC maintains play equipment.
15	Riverside Drive Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	MTC maintains play equipment.
16	Blueberry Road Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	
17	Beanacre Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	
18	Shaw Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	
19	Queensway Park /Woody	Play space (children & youth)	Part of the Clackers Brook green corridor. In need of development but this should happen 2020. MTC maintains play equipment.
20	George Ward Play Area	Play space (children & youth)	New play area on the George Ward Housing site. MTC maintains play equipment.

## Village Green Applications

Melksham Without Parish Council have made a number of Village Green applications in recent years. Whilst the majority were not successful, they show the value to the public as a public open space. The applications with supporting evidence are stored by the Parish Council. All spaces are owned by Wiltshire Council. Those that were not successful were owned at the time by Wiltshire Council, who stated that the spaces did not need to be designated as Village Green as they were owned by the Council.

Where relevant, the spaces are noted in the table above.

- Land behind Wellington Drive, Bowerhill in 2012 – failed

- Land at George Ward playing field, Shurnhold in 2007 (now known as Shurnhold Fields and the land recently transferred to MWPC on behalf of MWPC and MTC and being developed into a mini country park).
- Land at Grasmere, Bowerhill in 2012 – failed
- Land Blenheim Park, Bowerhill – 2006 and approved in 2008
- Land at Bowerhill Sports Field, Bowerhill – withdrawn by MWPC to allow new Portal Road to go through one end section, and community asset transfer of remainder which was made into a Field in Trust (diamond jubilee field) in 2012.

## Potential Local Green Spaces

Local Green Space is a planning designation that enables local communities to identify and protect particular green areas of significance for protection by a planning policy as part of Local and Neighbourhood Plans. For a Local Green Space to be eligible for designation, it must be:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to the local community and hold particular significance, for example, because of its beauty, historic significance recreational value (including playing fields), tranquility or richness of wildlife, and
- local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

There are a number of stages to the process of identifying and designating Local Green Spaces, including creating an initial long list, short listing, and consulting specifically with the local community and relevant landowners.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group prepared an initial long list of potential Local Green Spaces, which gives an initial assessment of all of the spaces against the National Planning Policy Framework criteria for designation. This list was informed by a request for residents to come forward with details of what local green space was important to them was widely shared in the local press and social media. In addition, local community groups and stakeholders were invited to specific sessions to mark up maps and provide evidence.

This long list is included in **Appendix 1**, and spaces are included in bold Table 1 above.

The long list arose from community consultation and from suggestions from Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council.

The Steering Group collected this information which is useful for establishing a baseline and initial long list of potential Local Green Spaces. As the process for collecting evidence for potential Local Green Spaces has a number of stages, the Steering Group has decided not to build more of an evidence base for designating Local Green Spaces as part of this Neighbourhood Plan (2020 – 2026), but instead to focus on the broader topic of open spaces. The list forms the basis for Local Green Space work to progress as part of a Neighbourhood Plan Review which is expected to be undertaken soon after the 2020- 2026 Plan is made.

## Provision of Open Space

Wiltshire Council's Draft Open Space and Play Area Study (2015-2026)<sup>4</sup> found a deficiency of some typologies of open space across the neighbourhood area, as illustrated in the tables below.

Provision of open space in Melksham

Typology	Existing Provision (Ha)	Existing Provision (Ha/1000)	Required Provision (Ha)	Required Provision (Ha/1000)	Supply (Ha)	Supply (Ha/1000)	Sufficiency of provision
Allotments	3.20	0.15	4.38	0.20	-1.18	-0.05	UNDER SUPPLY
Amenity Green Space	29.72	1.36	32.86	1.50	-3.14	-0.14	UNDER SUPPLY
Park and Recreation Ground (combined)	27.70	1.26	26.29	1.20	1.41	0.06	SUFFICIENT SUPPLY
Park and Recreation Ground	15.40	0.70	26.29	1.20	-10.89	-0.50	N/A
Outdoor Sport (Pitches)	5.10	0.23	0.00	0.00	5.10	0.23	N/A
Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	0.83	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.83	0.04	N/A
Outdoor Sport (Private)	6.37	0.29	0.00	0.00	6.37	0.29	N/A
Play Space (Children)	0.95	0.04	1.10	0.05	-0.15	-0.01	UNDER SUPPLY
Play Space (Youth)	0.45	0.02	0.44	0.02	0.01	0.00	SUFFICIENT SUPPLY
Education	21.16	0.97	0.00	0.00	21.16	0.97	N/A
Churchyards and Cemeteries	3.04	0.14	0.00	0.00	3.04	0.14	N/A

Summary of requirements of open space (hectares) for each parish in rural area

PARISH	CAB	Allotments	Recreation Space	Recreation Space (Private)	Play Space	Education	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Accessible Natural Green Space
Atworth	Melksham	-0.33	-2.08	0.00	0.05	19.26	0.47	0.00
Broughton Gifford	Melksham	-0.21	-2.40	0.31	-0.01	0.68	0.12	9.05
Bulkington	Melksham	-0.07	-0.09	0.00	0.19	0.00	0.25	0.00
Great Hinton	Melksham	-0.04	-0.51	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Keevil	Melksham	-0.11	-0.85	0.00	-0.03	0.05	0.59	0.00
Melksham	Melksham	-3.67	-44.03	0.00	-1.03	0.00	0.00	0.00
Melksham Without	Melksham	-1.81	-21.69	0.00	-0.51	0.00	0.00	0.00
Poulshot	Melksham	-0.09	-1.11	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.39	4.65
Seend	Melksham	-0.28	-1.17	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.66	0.00
Semington	Melksham	-0.23	-2.79	0.00	0.00	0.54	0.00	0.27
Steeple Ashton	Melksham	-0.23	-0.86	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.69	0.00

The Study identifies the following issues and priorities for different typologies within the Neighbourhood Area (some updated commentary in italics drawing on this parish level work):

### Allotments:

In Melksham access to allotments is generally poor as there is a under supply of allotments in both the urban and rural areas.

New development should meet shortfalls in the area. Consideration should also be given to encouraging community growing areas and/or community orchards in existing open spaces.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-open-space-study-draft.pdf>



**Amenity green space:**

Within Melksham the access to amenity green spaces is good with majority of the urban area having access. *On site provision of amenity green space should be sought through new development proportionate to the scale of the development and drawing on the existing character of frequent amenity green spaces in housing areas.*

**Park and Recreation Grounds:**

With good provision within Melksham itself, the key priorities are to maintain and improve the quality of existing provision. Within the rural area there is an under supply of recreational facilities. Where opportunities arise, new provision in parishes as appropriate should be sought.

**Children & Youth Facilities:**

There is an under supply of children's play spaces within Melksham urban area. Youth provision is sufficient, but access with both has gaps. Where development opportunities arise, new on site provision should be sought. The priority should be for fewer, larger and higher quality play spaces as opposed to a proliferation of smaller play spaces.

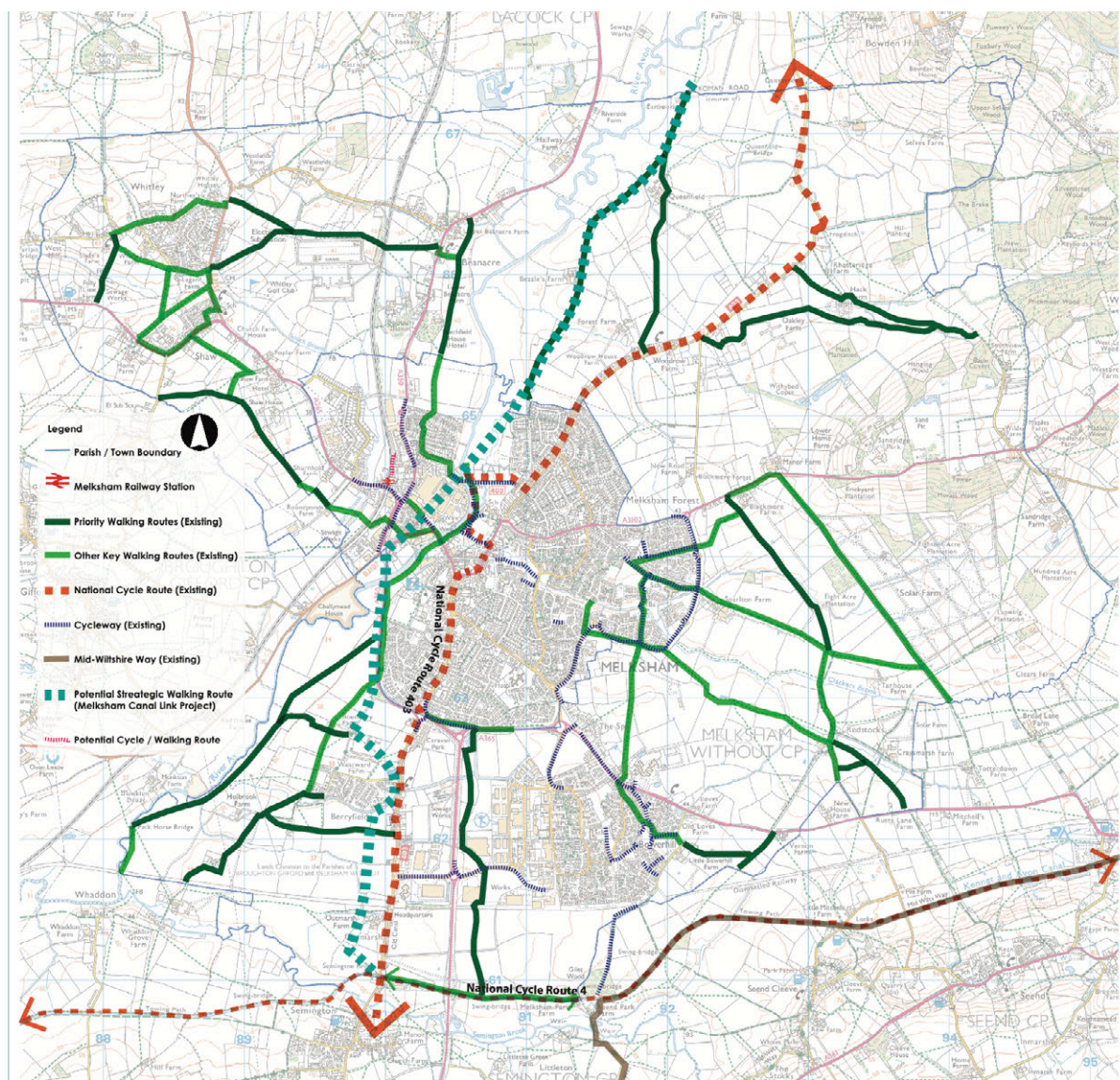
**2.2 Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**

The Melksham Neighbourhood Area enjoys good sustainable transport and active travel connections and routes that run through and around the area. Delivering and supporting sustainable transport, and reducing reliance on the private car, is a key aim of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Core Policy 61: Transport and New Development sets out the transport hierarchy that new development will be assessed against as follows:

- A) Visually impaired and other disabled people
- B) Pedestrians
- C) Cyclists
- D) Public transport
- E) Goods vehicles
- F) Powered two-wheelers
- G) Private cars.

Opportunities for active travel and sustainable transport in the Neighbourhood Area should be protected, enhanced and promoted as part of development in the area as well as through local route improvement projects. Key routes are shown on Map 2.

Map 2: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel: Key Routes



## Cycle Routes

Part of National Cycle Route 403 runs through the Neighbourhood Area north-south, from the southern part Melksham Without near Semington, northwards through Melksham town centre and along part of the River Avon, and into the north of Melksham Without via Melksham Forest and Woodrow. This strategic route crosses the North Wessex Downs and Severnake Forest, linking Chippenham to Marlborough and the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Overall, the quality of this route is good, mainly along the quiet old Semington Road and the road to Lacock.

The riverside part of the route linking Halfpenny Bridge and King George V Playing Field is in poor condition. The gravel path here is not safe for winter cycling and would benefit from some improvements.

Other cycle routes, adapted from data on OpenStreetMap, are also shown on Map 2. There are opportunities to link these existing cycleways and improve the network of cycling infrastructure through the town and out into the Parish.

## Public Rights of Way and Walking Routes

There is an extensive Public Right of Way (PRoW) network which links the town with the villages and surrounding landscape of Melksham Without. There is also a network of PRoWs within Melksham Town and Bowerhill. These routes are important to promote active travel and pedestrian priority in the Neighbourhood Area. The interactive Public Rights of Way map is available on Wiltshire Council's website:

<https://wiltscouncil.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=43d5a86a545046b2b59fd7dd49d89d22>

### Priority Rights of Way

In July 2018, Melksham Without Parish Council agreed a list of 'priority' rights of way which are given priority for clearance, improvement and signage as they are considered to be the most useful within the parish. The routes are listed below and identified on the Sustainable Transport and Active Travel Map:

- **MELW67-** Footpath from the Melksham Urban District boundary at its junction with path No. 64 leading north to the Chippenham – Melksham road., A.350, about midway between paths Nos.99 and 101. Approximate length 1.006 k.m
- **MELW47-** Footpath from Forest Lane, C.165, leading south-east, north- east and east to path No 48, 366 m west of the north- east corner of Basin Covert. Approximate length 2.012 k.m.
- **MELW61-** From lower Woodrow road C.165, near Forest Farm leading north across the Canal to Queenfield Farm and continuing north to the Lacock path No.36 at the Earthworks and Roman road. Approximate length 2.012 k.m.
- **MELW48-** From Forest Lane, C.165 leading south -easterly along the access track to Hack Farm for approximately 420 metres, then over a brook in a north- easterly direction for approximately 50 metres continuing south- easterly past path No.47 to its junction with path No.50 near the northern corner of Basin Covert. Approximate length 1.465 k.m
- **MELW23-** Footpath from the Urban District boundary at its junction with path No.31 leading south- east across path No. 18 to Browne Lane, path No.41, near Redstocks; including a diversion leading south-east to path No.20. Approximate Length 1700 m.
- **MELW23A-** Footpath from Browns Lane, path No 41, at Redstocks, just north of the junction of path No 20 with Redstocks Lane, U/C 6193, leading south-east to path No. 23B and across path No. 25 to the Seend Parish boundary on the Box- Devizes road, A.365, about 229m west of Michell's Farm. Approximate length 640m.
- **MELW42-** Footpath from the Southern side of the A365, Devizes Road, at approximate OS Grid Reference 906 627, leading south and then west around the balancing pond, thence continuing in a generally southerly direction past the sports ground and the old railway track to the canal south of Newton Farm. Approximate length 1.78km.
- **MELW26-** Footpath from the Melksham – Calne road, B.3102, west of Blackmore Farm, leading south – east across path No.41 and continuing south – west to path No.22 and south- east to Browns Lane path No. 41, at its junction with path No.29. Approximate length 1.737 k.m.
- **MELW35-** Footpath from Bowerhill Lane, U/C 6072, leading south- east past Little Bowerhill Farm and east to its junction with path No. 36 at the southern end of Carnation Lane. Approximate length 594 m.
- **MELW36-** Footpath from the Box- Devizes road, A.365, opposite Redstocks Lane, path No.20, leading south- west along Carnation Lane to the Seend Parish boundary. Approximate length 320 m.
- **MELW15-** Footpath from path No.5, east of the River Avon, leading north- east to its junction with Melksham path No.30 at Western Way. Approximate length 735m.
- **MELW5-** Bridleway from Berryfield Lane, U/C 6065, east of Boundary Farm, leading north – west past Boundary Farm, across path No.6 and continuing south- west over

to the Broughton Gifford Parish boundary at the junction of path Nos. 12 and 13. Approximate length 1.74 k.m.

- **MELW7-** Footpath from Berryfield Lane, U/C 6066, leading west across path No. 6, then south – west to the junction of Old Holbrook Lane, path Nos.14 and 8, and continuing south- west to the junction with Hilperton path No.23 at the old railway. Approximate length 450m.
- **MELW8-** Footpath from the Trowbridge – Melksham road, A.350, at Semington Lane leading west past its junction with path No.9, then north -west to the junction of Old Holbrook Lane, path No.14, with path, No.7, east of Holbrook Farm. Approximate length 1.006 k.m.
- **MELW93-** Footpath from Norrington Lane, C.239, leading east-north-east and south-east to its junction with path Nos. 90, 94 and 94A to the Melksham Urban District boundary, west of Shurnhold Farm. Approximate length 1206m.
- **MELW105-** A short path leading, north-west along the Melksham Urban District boundary at Shurnhold linking the two sections of Melksham Urban District path No. 22. Approximate length 55m.
- **MELW85-** Footpath from Corsham Road, B.3353, about 45 m north of the Atworth Road, C.220, by Whitley House, leading south- east for about 534 m to its junction with path No. 84, then south east for about 60 m, east for about 118 m and south- east for 100 m, east for 120 m and south- east for 122 m, continuing east over the railway to the Chippenham- Melksham road., A.350, at its junction with path No.97 by the Carpenters Arms Inn, Beanacre. Approximate length 1618m.
- **MELW84-** From the Corsham Road, B.3353, Whitley, opposite road U/C 6026 and south of “Mulum in Parvo”, leading north east for approximately 300 metres where north north east for approximately 150 metres to its junction with path No. 85. Width 2 metres except at OS grid reference ST89227 66299 where 5.5 metres. Approximate length 650 metres.
- **MELW66-** From Boundary of Town Parish at Methuen Avenue northwards to junction with MELW61 north of Queensfield Farm”.
- **MELW74-** From the Atworth road, C.220, at West Hill about 64m west of Littleworth Lane, U/C 6024, leading south- west to the Box- Devizes road, A.365, about 183m east of the Golden Fleece Inn at milestone “Bath 10”. Approximate length 503m.

### Heritage Walking Routes

Footpath routes are promoted locally through leaflets and maps. There are a range of routes which take in local heritage assets, the River Avon and historic route of the Wilts and Berks Canal. Detail is included in **Appendix 2**, but these routes include:

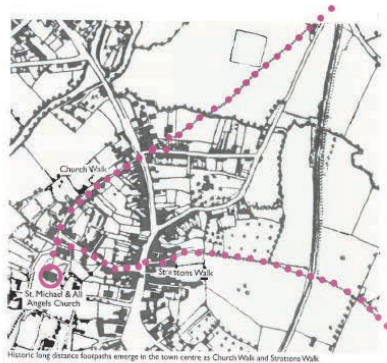
- **Melksham Town Trail no. 1:** Starting at the Town Hall and proceeding down King Street, near to St. Anthony’s Church returning to Market Place via the Spa Road.
- **Melksham Town Trail no. 2:** Starting at the Town Hall to walk north towards Bath Road, then south towards Lowborne to return to Market Place.
- **Walking Melksham’s Lost Waterway:** Walks along parts of the route of the historic Wilts and Berks Canal.
- **East of Melksham Trail – Melksham is Great:** A sculpture trail connecting the historic town centre with development to the east of the town.
- **Riverside Millennium Walk:** This is a walk from the Conigre Mead nature reserve in the south to Murry Walk in the north along the River Avon going through the centre of the town and along the edge of the King George V park.
- **Melksham in the First World War:** A walking route taking in buildings with a significance in relation to the First World War.

The Melksham Urban Design Study, which was prepared in 2006, also identifies historic, existing and proposed footpath links in the town centre, as well as footpaths which were need of improvement in 2006. These are shown on the figure below.



## Historic footpaths

The plan shows historic footpaths leading to the parish church.



Historic long distance footpaths emerge in the town centre as Church Walk and Strattons Walk.



Church Walk leading to the parish church from the north east.



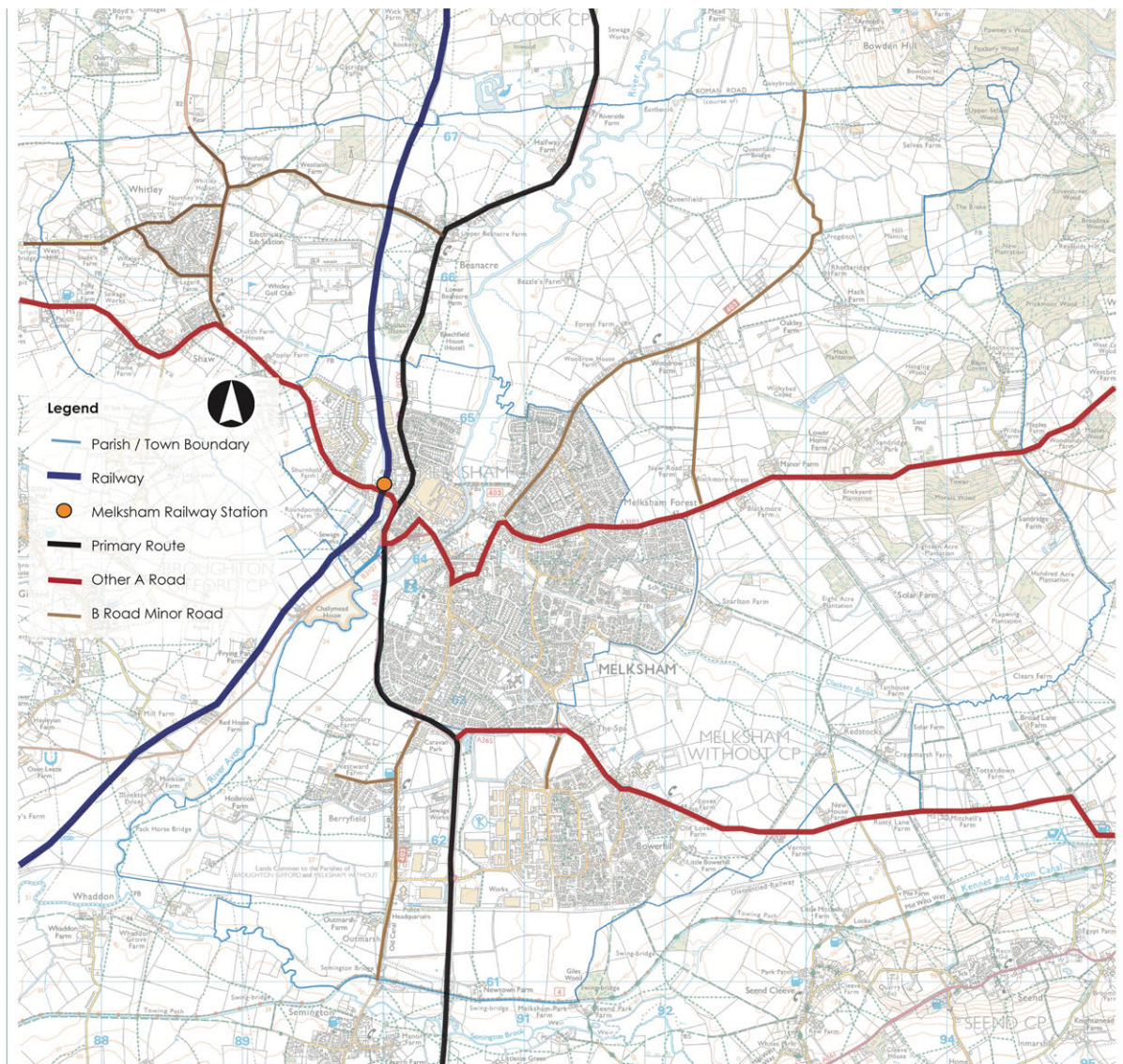
Strattons Walk leading to the parish church from the east.

## Melksham footpaths

The plan shows how footpaths have evolved and new ones developed as new supermarkets have been built. Additional footpaths could be considered, indicated in dark grey.



Map 3 – Rail and Key Roads Routes



## Railway

Melksham Railway Station, located in the north east of the town, is on the Wessex Main Line which runs between Bristol Temple Meads and Southampton Central. Trains from the station run approximately every two hours each way to Westbury and Trowbridge. The train line is an important sustainable transport link that enables residents and visitors to make sustainable transport choices and promotes an alternative to the private car. The train station has car and cycle parking, and is served by local bus routes.

Melksham Station was actually closed in 1966 but the line remained open for freight and diverted passenger trains. However in 1985 it was reopened and in 2013 an improved service was introduced which quickly became the fastest growing of GWR's routes. In 2018 the platform was lengthened to allow longer trains to call. Plans are now in hand to improve the car parking and bus access at the station.

In the year to March 2019, there were 75,000 passenger journeys made to and from Melksham Station. Local research estimates that this number could rise to somewhere



between 260,000 and 600,000 per annum in the foreseeable future (subject to caveats). Further detail is included in the Prediction of Passenger Numbers – Train Journeys to and from Melksham Station Report.

### **Bus Service**

Melksham has two town services, No.14 to Asda, Forest, Queensway and the town centre, and No.15 to Asda, town centre, occasionally Berryfield, and the east of Melksham. Neither service visits the station, although No. 14 goes quite close. There is a less frequent joint service on Saturdays.

Ideally, No. 14 could visit the station at times to connect with trains, and No. 15 could visit Berryfield and then use Portal road and Pathfinder Way to serve Bowerhill Industrial estate. This would offer a much better coordinated service to link bus and train travel, offering far more sustainable options.

The Town and is linked via Faresaver 34 service to Chippenham to the north, and Trowbridge and Frome to the south and West.

The Faresaver X72 service links the Town and Bowerhill to Bath. This is likely to be an hourly service from April 2020 following the withdrawal of First Bus from the route. Shaw and Whitley are also served by the X72.

For more details see <http://www.passenger.chat/22905>

## **2.3 Biodiversity, Woodland and Trees**

Supporting healthy GI is vital for the resilience of wildlife which is under increasing stress from habitat loss. The Neighbourhood Area is host to a range of wildlife sites and features which support the overall wildlife network and contribute to the wellbeing of wildlife and residents alike.

A full record of habitats and biodiversity information has been obtained from Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre, this data is assembled using a mixture of field survey data and aerial photograph interpretation to compile a habitat inventory. This is available in full in **Appendix 3**.

### ***Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)***

There are two areas of nationally important designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the area. Upper Selves Wood and Lower Selves Wood (which, together with nearby areas of woodland, comprise parts of the Spye Park SSSI) are both located in the north east corner of Melksham Without, adjoined by the parish boundary. The main habitat here is broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. In 2010, both sites were assessed by Natural England to be in 'unfavourable – recovering' condition.

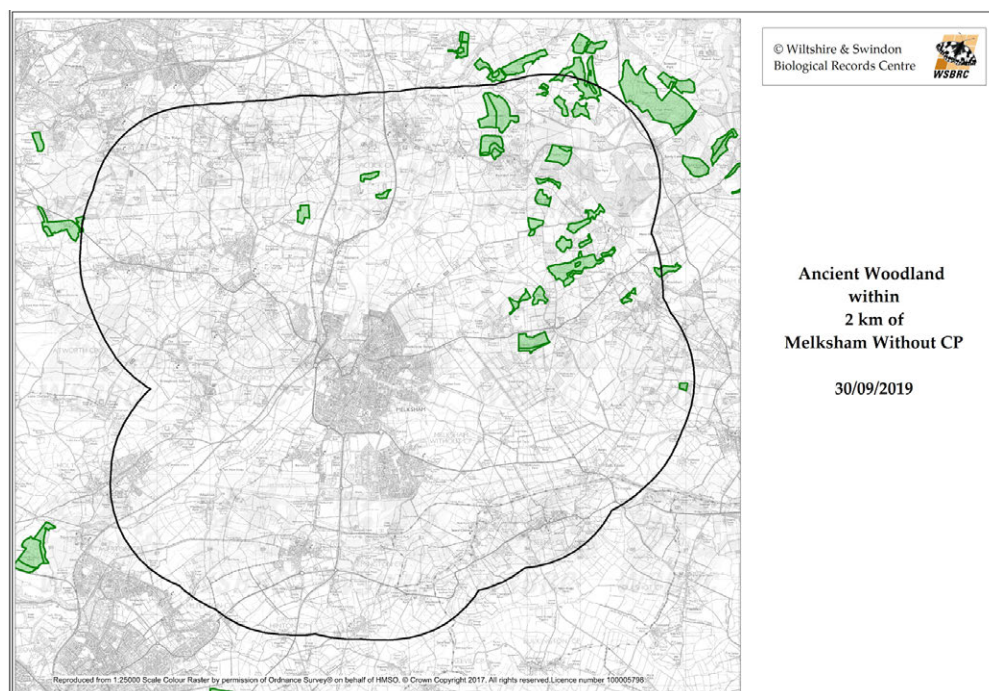
The SSSIs were assessed as 'unfavourable' due to their breeding bird assemblage score. In 2010, the English Woodland Grant Scheme had put measures in place to diversify the woodland structure with the aim of improving the habitat for birds, hence the sites also being assessed as "recovering". A small lichen flora was identified in Upper Selves Wood (none in Lower Selves Wood) in lichen survey of 2008, but this unit was not identified specifically as being "unfavourable" and no restorative/remedial work was identified as being necessary.

SSSIs are identified on Map 4.

## Ancient Woodland

Both SSSIs are also areas of Ancient Woodland. There are also other areas of Ancient Woodland within the Neighbourhood Area, including Daniel's Wood, Basin Covert and Morass Wood. This is significant because Ancient Woodlands now cover just 2.4% of the UK (Woodland Trust 2019). The Woodland Trust defines Ancient Woodland as areas that have 'had woodland cover for centuries and have been relatively undisturbed by human activity. Over hundreds of years they have evolved complex communities of trees, plants, fungi, micro-organisms and insects'. Ancient Woodland is identified on Map 3 below.

Map 3: Ancient Woodland (priority habitat) in the Neighbourhood Area, and within 2km of Melksham Without



## Local Wildlife Sites

There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites (or termed 'County Wildlife Sites' in the Core Strategy) within the Neighbourhood Area, as identified by the Wiltshire Core Strategy Policies Map (2015). These are also identified on Map 4, with more detail in table 2. These include areas of Ancient Woodland, as well as the River Avon (which runs north-south through the Neighbourhood Area) and the Kennet and Avon Canal (which comprises part of the southern boundary of the Area).

Map 4: Wildlife Sites in the Neighbourhood Area, and within 2km of Melksham Without

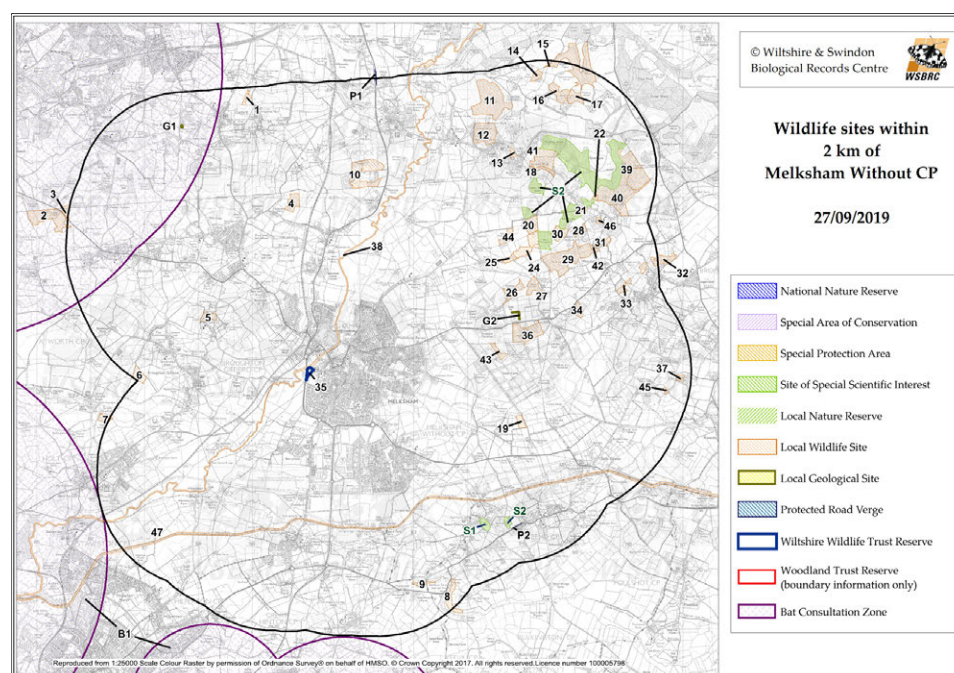


Table 2: Wildlife Sites in the Neighbourhood Area shown on Map 4 (extracted from data from the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre)

Map Code	Site name	Site Description	Main Habitat
4	Daniel's Wood	An ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland of Oak and Sweet Chestnut over Hazel and Bluebells.	Broadleaved Woodland
19	Prickly Sevens Meadow	An unimproved species-rich hay meadow enclosed by mature hedgerow	Neutral grassland
24	Southview Farm Meadow 2	A neutral hay meadow on gently rolling clay land with semi-improved mesotrophic grassland and large in-field Oaks.	Neutral grassland
25	Hack Farm Meadow	A small area of species-rich neutral meadow.	Neutral grassland
26	Hanging Wood	Mature poplar plantation on a very wet ancient site with Hazel understorey and characteristic ground flora throughout.	Broadleaved woodland
27	Basin Covert	Ancient woodland site with large areas of conifer plantation surrounded by a perimeter of semi-natural broadleaved woodland.	Conifer woodland
35	Conigre Mead WWT Reserve	A small wet fen-meadow on the outskirts of Melksham, managed as a nature reserve and extensively planted with trees and shrubs.	Neutral grassland
36	Morass Wood	Former coppice woodland on a moderate greensand slope with large areas of very wet flush.	Broadleaved woodland
38	Bristol Avon River	One of the main river systems draining north-west Wiltshire.	River
43	Eighteen Acre Plantation	Plantation woodland with much field maple, ash and oak.	Broadleaved woodland
44	Hill Planting	Uniform even-aged plantation of mature oak in eastern half and ash and oak in western half, seperated by a shallow ditch. Understorey of neglected hazel coppice, together with small hawthorn trees and suckering elm in western half.	Broadleaved woodland
47	Kennet and Avon Canal	A restored canal much used for recreation.	Standing open water
G2	Sahara Sand, Melksham Without	Working pit in sands and some sandstone (known as Lower Calcareous Grit) with good sedimentary structures and fossils. Present working 1.5ha.	N/A

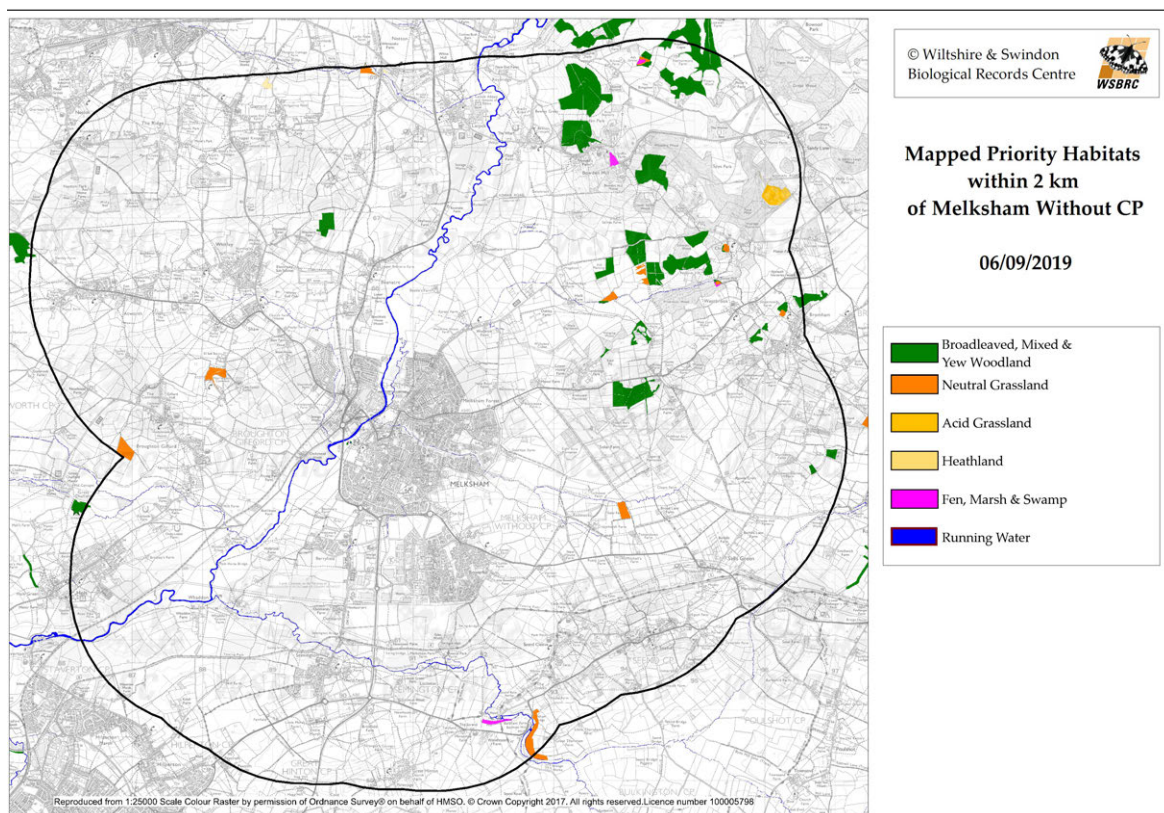


S2	Spye Park	N/A	<p>Spye Park is an extensive habitat mosaic comprising large expanses of some of the finest undisturbed alderwoods in the county, along with oakwoods, parkland and an area of dry acidic grassland containing several locally uncommon plants.</p>
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Conigre Mead Nature Reserve, located at the south of the River Avon at the western boundary of Melksham town, was bought by local people and given as a nature reserve to Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in 1989. The site is managed by local volunteers and is now a valuable habitat for a range of wildlife including wild meadow flowers, insects, birds, woodmice and small water mammals, as well as bats. More information on the Nature Reserve can be found at **Appendix 4**. The Reserve is identified as number 35 on Map 4.

### Priority Habitats

Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was published in 2008. The aim of the BAP was to identify targets and actions for the conservation of priority habitats and species in Wiltshire and Swindon and combine these actions into one coherent plan which could be delivered through a partnership of organisations working together. A range of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats are shown within the Neighbourhood Area, including woodland and neutral grassland. These are located on Map 5.



Map 5: Priority Habitats (excluding Ancient Woodland) in the Neighbourhood Area, and within 2km of Melksham Without

## Significant Trees

The Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory identifies some significant trees in the Neighbourhood Area (see: <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/?v=1639349&ml=map&z=13&nwLat=51.396500573667815&nwLng=-2.2358336448669514&seLat=51.35224513975118&seLng=-2.034646511077889>), categorized into Ancient, Veteran and Notable trees.

The Inventory lists 1 Ancient Tree, 2 Notable Trees and 5 Veteran Trees in the area.

According to the Woodland Trust, an ancient tree is in the third and final stage of its life. How old an ancient tree is depends on the species. Some species can live longer than others with yews, oaks and sweet chestnuts topping the age charts at over 1000 years. The Ancient Tree in the Neighbourhood Area is Cromwell's Oak.



Cromwell's Oak Ancient Tree

Proarb Magazine (March 2018) includes the following information on the Ancient Tree: *"The Cromwell's Oak can be found within the corner of an old agricultural field adjacent to the town of Melksham. This tree is one of few remaining glimpses of the historic landscape that covered the local area; the region in which Cromwell's Oak sits was once a vast medieval forest, and a favoured hunting ground of Tudor kings. The tree has a girth of 7.1m and is thought to be around 700 years old. Its hollow trunk bears the scars of historic fire damage, unfortunately all too common in such important trees. While it shares some common features with other ancient oaks, the tree's history is not just locked up in its annual rings; it also features in the history books. This ancient oak is thought to have played a part in a nationally significant event: the first English Civil War. According to legend, Oliver Cromwell stayed at a nearby farm in 1643. After the Parliamentarian army faced a crushing defeat at the hands of the Royalist cavalry at the Battle of Roundway Down, this mighty oak played a gruesome part in the aftermath of the battle when, on the orders of Cromwell, some of his unruly soldiers were hanged from its boughs."* See **Appendix 5** for full magazine extract.

The Woodland Trust defines veteran trees as having some of the features found on an ancient tree, but not having the great age. Although they're not as old as ancient trees, they're still incredibly important. There are 5 veteran trees in the Neighbourhood Area.

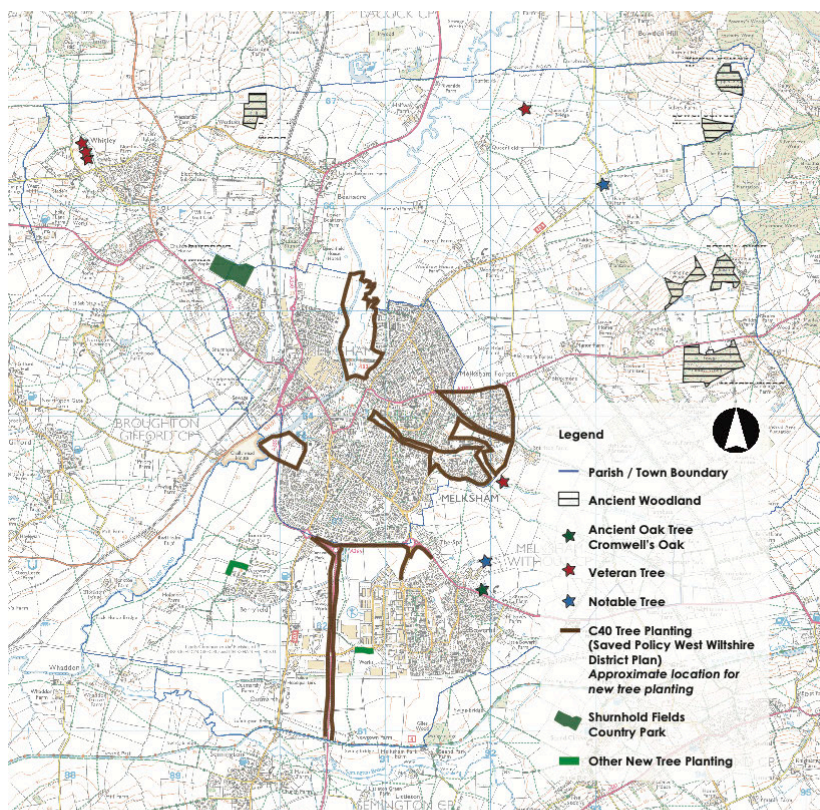
There are 2 notable trees in the area. The Trust defines notable trees as usually mature trees which may stand out in the local environment because they are large in comparison with other trees around them.

## Bristol Tree Replacement Standard

Bristol City Council have developed a bespoke system of compensation for the loss of trees from development sites, where the number of trees required to compensate for loss of existing trees depends upon the size of its trunk diameter – the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard<sup>5</sup>. This replacement standard can be used to inform how trees lost in the Plan area should be replaced. The aim of this standard is to plant suitable numbers of replacement trees in relation to trees lost, and increase tree coverage in the plan area overall.

### The Importance of Trees

- Trees naturally absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, a key greenhouse gas removing 4 million tonnes of it from the atmosphere every year
- Greenspace with good levels of tree cover is proven to be much less costly to maintain than grassed areas
- The presence of trees often encourages people to exercise, thereby reducing the incidence of heart attacks and Type 2 Diabetes.
- Symptoms of anxiety, depression and insomnia alleviated with the presence of trees
- Family and community environments are much more harmonious and closely knit where the setting includes trees
- Local air quality is improved as trees cut the level of airborne particulates<sup>10</sup> and absorb nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone
- Trees can link pockets of wildlife that, in time, helps to increase it and also bring people closer to nature
- Trees and greenspaces can increase property value of 15 – 18%. The larger the trees are then the greater their proportional value<sup>6</sup>.



Map 6: Significant trees and woodland in the Neighbourhood Area

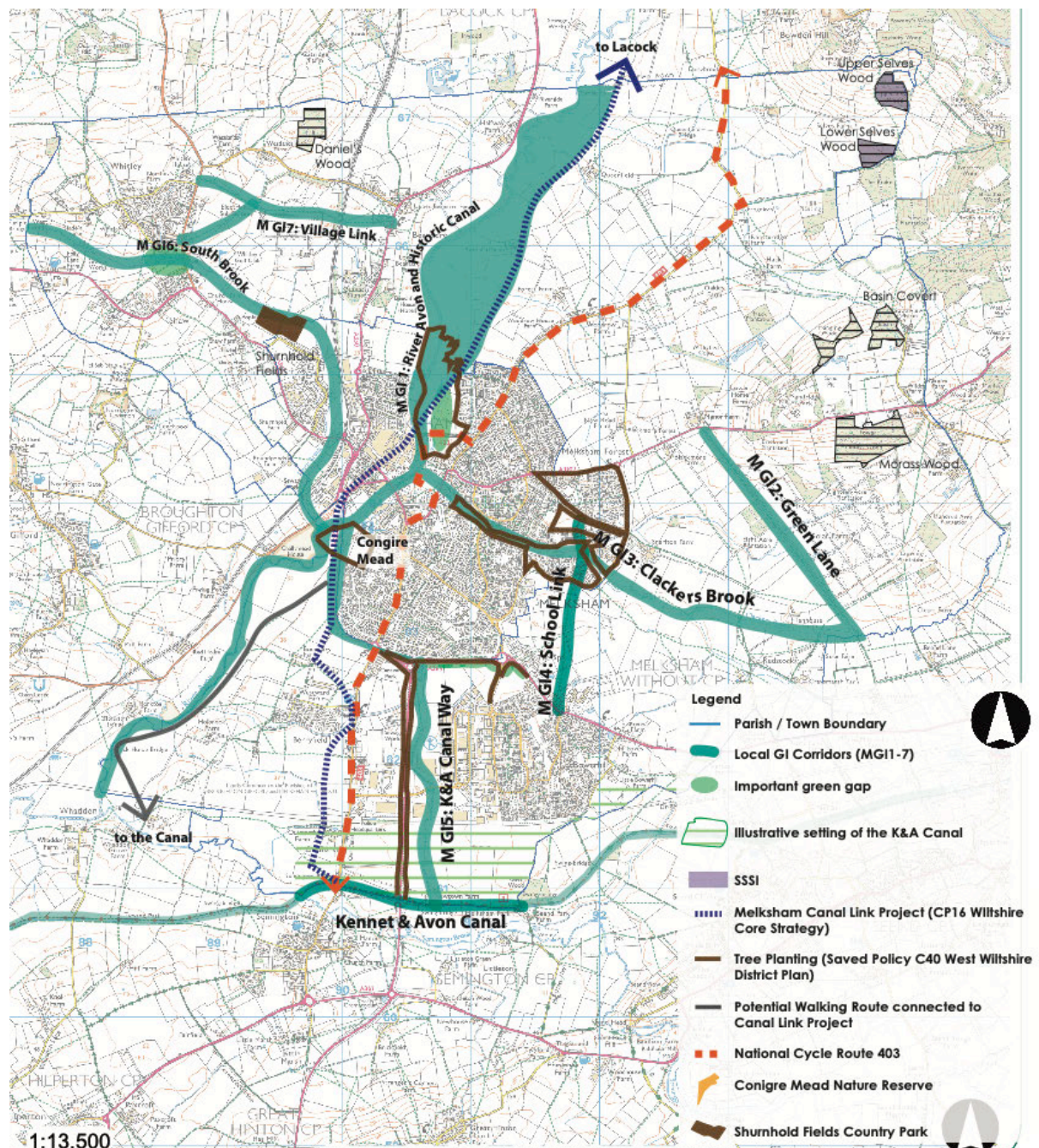
<sup>5</sup> See page 21 of the Planning Obligation Document 2012  
<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34520/SPD%20Final%20Doc%20Dec2012.pdf/daf75908-50fd-4138-afed-770310a6a431>

<sup>6</sup> Facts taken from 'The Case for Trees' Forestry Commission 2010



### Part 3 Key Assets and Priorities

The Green Infrastructure Assets and Priorities in the Melksham Neighbourhood Area are illustrated on Map 7: GI Key Assets & Priorities: Strategy Diagram (see below) and the GI Key Assets & Priorities: Open Spaces Map (see Map 1 above). Detail on these assets and priorities is given below.



Map 7: Green Infrastructure Key Assets & Priorities: Strategy Diagram

## Green Infrastructure Key Assets and Priorities: Strategy Diagram

### Local GI Corridors (MG11-7)

These are linear elements of Melksham's GI, linking local sites and delivering connectivity of assets between and within different parts of the Neighbourhood Area.

**MG11: River Avon** - Following the line of the River Avon, this is a key component of the GI of the Neighbourhood Area, providing important habitats. This corridor is also the setting for a potential strategic walking route identified by the Steering Group and linking the Kennet and Avon canal and Lacock. It provides a key connection between different open spaces such as the King George V park and Conigre Mead Nature Reserve. GI opportunities here include:

- Encouraging the implementation of management regimes and practices to manage habitats.
- Promoting the role of the River Avon as reinforcing local distinctiveness and providing a setting for the settlement and potentially for any new development.

**MG12: Green Lane** – Following the line of Bridleway MELW40 from Manor Farm in the north towards Totterdown Farm, which is just outside Melksham Without to the south. This is a key green walking route identified by the Steering Group, and is part of a key walking loop along with the parallel Priority Walking Route MELW26. GI opportunities here include:

- Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the linear route.
- Improving accessibility whilst maintaining the rural character of the lane.

**MG13: Clackers Brook** – A vegetated tributary to the River Avon, running into the town from the south east, providing key habitats and extensive accessible natural green space in the urban area. GI opportunities here include:

- Conserving the riparian corridor of habitats and vegetation along the brook.
- Ensuring the crossing points of the Brook are well maintained to enable walkers to cross the tributary which dissects the land here.
- Part of this green corridor is identified as an area for future tree planting along the Brook as part of saved policy C40 (West Wiltshire Local Plan).

**MG14: School Link** – A 'Safe Route to School', this is a lane that links Bowerhill and Melksham Oak Community School with Melksham and Forest & Sandridge Primary School. The link follows footpath MELW18 and provides a key safe and non-vehicular route to schools and between the settlements. GI opportunities here include:

- Promoting access to this green route reducing the need for travel by car.
- Strengthening links to the countryside for the school commuters.
- Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the linear route.

**MG15: K&A Canal Way** – A key walking route running parallel to the old Semington Road and A350, linking Bowerhill with the Kennet and Avon Canal (which forms part of the southern boundary of Melksham Without). This corridor follows the route of footpath MELW42. GI opportunities here include:

- Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the linear route whilst enhancing the setting of the Kennet and Avon Canal.
- Opportunity for appropriate signage to direct people from Bowerhill to the Canal.

**MG16: South Brook** - A vegetated tributary to the River Avon, running through the green gap between Whitley and Shaw and into the town. The route provides key habitats and recreation space. The route also runs through Shurnhold Fields which is a recently planted area of WWI memorial tree woodland which will be brought forward as a country park for residents and visitors to enjoy. GI opportunities here include:

- Conserving the riparian corridor of habitats and vegetation along the brook.

- Ensuring the crossing points of the Brook are well maintained to enable walkers to cross the tributary which dissects the land here.
- Promoting Shurnhold Fields as a mini-country park.

**MG17: Village Link** – This corridor consists of two 'Priority Rights of Way' (MELW85 and MELW84) as identified by Melksham Without Parish Council, linking Whitley with Beanacre to the east. The route bypasses the Electricity Substation which is well-screened by dense tree planting. GI opportunities here include:

- Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity along this key linkage route.

### **Melksham Canal Link Project**

The Wiltshire Core Strategy safeguards the route of the Melksham Link Canal in Core Policy 16. This policy safeguards the identified route (see Figure 6) for developing a canal link to the south west of Melksham town between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Avon, and to the north east of Melksham town between the River Avon and the historic alignment of the Wilts and Berks Canal. The project is an opportunity to improve the GI network both within the Neighbourhood Area and the wider Melksham Community Area with associated benefits such as increased walking and cycling routes and linked to this is the opportunity to promote tourism within the town.

The planning application for the southern part of the project has been submitted to Wiltshire Council and has been under consideration since 2012 (ref. W/12/01080/FUL). The application is for the creation of the new waterway, as well as 10 bridges, the associated footpath and cycleway, and a new access road to Berryfield.

### **Potential Strategic Walking Route: 'Destination Lacock'**

The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust has recently presented plans to Wiltshire Council, which are supported by both Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council, to bring forward the opportunity to create a strategic walking route through the Neighbourhood Area, broadly following the route of the River Avon, and along the ridgeline from the north of the town to Lacock beyond, following the historic line of the Wilts and Berks Canal. Parts of this route are already existing and already provide pleasant walking routes along the River (e.g. Riverside Millennium Walk) which are key areas for biodiversity. The majority of the northern part of the potential route is concurrent with the route for the Melksham Canal Link. It is estimated that a reasonable timeframe to deliver the towpath along this route is within 5 years.

### **Cycle Routes**

The strategic national cycle routes 403 and route 4 that run through and adjacent to the plan area, are key assets and priority to maintain and improve, especially as development comes forward. Cycle Route 403 is particularly important for providing an active travel route within the town and between Melksham Without and the town centre. Other cycle routes have also been identified on map 2 in this report. This map illustrates potential for a more joined up network.

National Cycle Network Design Principles for new routes should be followed:

- a. Be traffic-free or quiet-way
- b. Be wide enough to comfortably accommodate all users
- c. Be designed to minimise maintenance
- d. Be signed clearly and consistently
- e. Have a smooth surface that is well drained
- f. Be fully accessible to all legitimate users
- g. Feel like a safe place to be

- h. Enable all users to cross roads safely and step-free
- i. Be attractive and interesting

## **Open Spaces**

Allotments: New development should meet shortfalls in the area. Consideration should also be given to encouraging community growing areas and/or community orchards in existing open spaces.

Amenity green space: On site provision of amenity green space should be sought through new development proportionate to the scale of the development and drawing on the existing character of frequent amenity green spaces in housing areas across the Joint Plan area.

Park and Recreation Grounds: With good provision within Melksham itself, the key priorities are to maintain and improve the quality of existing provision. Within the rural area there is an under supply of recreational facilities. Where opportunities arise, new provision in parishes as appropriate should be sought.

Children & Youth Facilities: There is an under supply of children's play spaces within Melksham urban area. Youth provision is sufficient, but access with both has gaps. Where development opportunities arise, new on site provision should be sought. The priority should be for fewer, larger and higher quality play spaces as opposed to a proliferation of smaller play spaces.

Accessible Natural Green Spaces: Natural Green Spaces such as Clackers Brook and Conigre Mead are key assets that should be protected and enhanced.

## **Shurnhold Fields Mini Country Park**

Recently planted in November 2018, Shurnhold Fields is a mini country park which includes 100 WWI memorial trees. The land is owned by Melksham Without Parish Council and administered by a joint steering group committee of the Town and Parish.

Shurnhold Fields is being developed into a mini country park following the two old George Ward School playing fields being turned into Public Open Space. The land has been transferred from the housing developer of neighbouring George Ward Gardens and is now owned by Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Town Council. Whilst the fields are being managed by the councils and their staff, there is also an enthusiastic group of volunteers who have formed the "Friends of Shurnhold Fields". There have been some 200 WWI memorial trees planted, a wildflower meadow and seating, with plans for a small, modest car park and a rare native species orchard.

## **Woodland and Trees**

Protecting and enhancing existing trees and woodland (including Ancient Woodland), planting more trees and protecting their priority habitats are key priorities for the Neighbourhood Area. This is important for community health and wellbeing and for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in the area. Trees and woodland are also important actors in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, playing an important role in the fight against the climate crisis. Green space with good levels of tree coverage is also proven to be much less costly to maintain than grassed areas.

Saved Policy WWC40 from the West Wiltshire District Plan proposes tree planting schemes, using native species characteristic of the local area, in the areas shown on the diagram.



Explanatory text to the policy also states that Wiltshire Council will continue to plant new trees more generally, and 'to improve the biodiversity value of new developments, the trees planted should also be native species characteristic of the local area. Where public open space and water features are incorporated within new developments, those that are not used for formal recreation purposes should be planted with native species characteristic of the local area. This will promote the creation of new habitats, which are of interest both for their nature conservation and informal recreation value'.

## Tree Replacement

The importance of trees in the Neighbourhood Area is clear and tree loss and replacement as part of development is an important factor. Bristol City Council has developed a bespoke system of compensation for the loss of trees from development sites, where the number of trees required to compensate for loss of existing trees depends of the size of its trunk diameter. This replacement standard, as shown in Table 2 below, can be used to inform how trees lost in the Melksham Neighbourhood Area should be replaced. Replacement planting should normally be within the development site, but if this is not feasible, could also be planted at a suitable location off site.

<b>Trunk Diameter of Tree lost to development (cm measured at 1.5 metres above ground level)</b>	<b>Number of Replacement Trees</b>
Less than 15	0 - 1
15 - 19.9	1
20 - 29.9	2
30 - 39.9	3
40 - 49.9	4
50 - 59.9	5
60 - 69.9	6
70 - 79.9	7
80 +	8

Table 2: Bristol City Council Tree Replacement Standard

## Melksham Oak Ancient Tree

Melksham Oak Ancient tree is a significant green asset in the Neighbourhood Area protected by a Tree Protection Order. A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is an order made by Wiltshire Council to protect trees. In general, a TPO makes it an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot or wilfully destroy a tree.

## Important Green Gaps

Important 'green gaps' within the Neighbourhood Area have been identified for protection going forward. These green gaps are areas of undeveloped land which are located between built areas of settlement, that play an important role of separation and contribute towards the setting of the nearby development.

The first green gap is located between Whitley and Shaw. South Brook runs through this important gap. It is identified due to its important role as a key area of landscape which provides space between the two villages contributing to the separate identity and

character of the two villages and to local visual and functional amenity with a number of footpaths crisscrossing the area.

The second is located in the north of Melksham town along part of the River Avon. This is the open area between the areas of 20<sup>th</sup> Century development on either side of the River. This space provides important accessible green space including recreation areas and allotments – on both sides of the River.

A third important green gap is between Melksham and Bowerhill, in the northern part of the development soon to be delivered known as 'Pathfinder Way'. This green area is drawn into the approved Pathfinder Way masterplan, and provides open space, including a children's play area, between the south of Melksham and the new development.

### **Important Wildlife Sites** (see also 2.3 above)

#### ***Conigre Mead Local Nature Reserve***

Conigre Mead Nature Reserve, located at the south of the River Avon at the western boundary of Melksham town, is a key locally important wildlife site to protect, manage and enhance going forward (see also section 2.3 above).

#### ***Upper & Lower Selves Wood***

These areas of woodland are classified as Ancient Woodland and as nationally significant SSSIs.

### **Protection of the Setting of the Kennet and Avon Canal**

The Kennet and Avon Canal forms part of the southern boundary of Melksham Without bordering Semington Parish, and is a key feature of the southern part of the Neighbourhood Area. Its landscape and biodiversity are key assets, as is the life and economy that the canal brings to the area. National Cycle Network 4 also runs along this section of the Canal.

The setting, or the surroundings in which the canal is experienced, is also important to bear in mind when considering issues or enhancement priorities. The extent of the setting is not fixed and may change over time. The contribution made by elements of the setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the character of canal.

Access to and along the canal should be maintained and potentially improved where opportunities permit.

### **Green Infrastructure Key Assets and Priorities: Open Spaces**

The Steering Group has identified the amount of accessible and open green space as a key positive feature of Melksham to protect and enhance – more detail in section 2.1 above.