

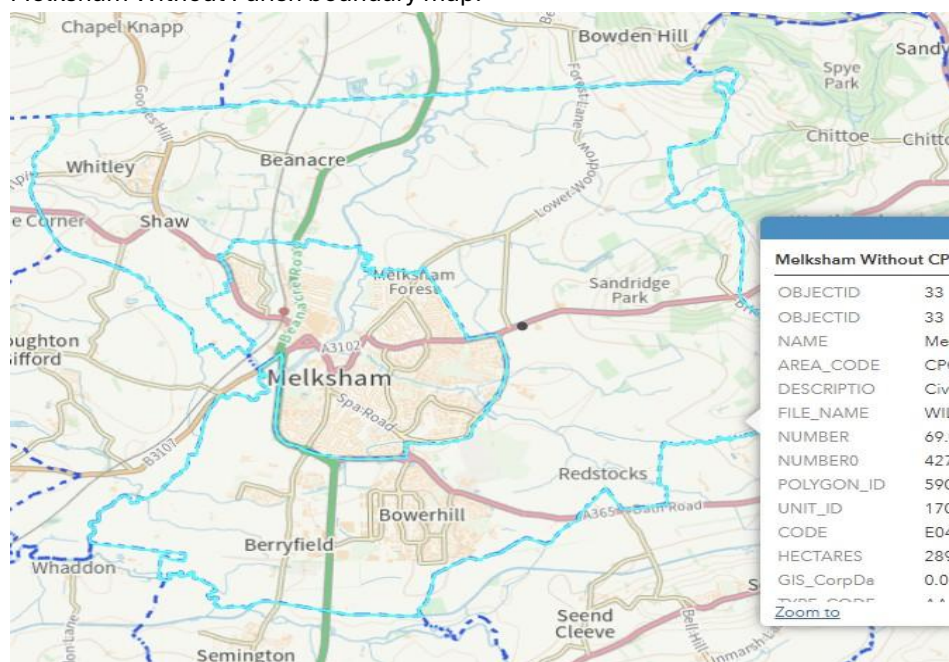
## Public Art Officer comments: PL/2026/01555 - Land at Blackmore Farm, Sandridge Common, Melksham, SN12 7QS

### Background and context

Melksham Without is a civil parish in Wiltshire that surrounds, but does not include, the town of Melksham. It has population of circa 7,500 which is spread across the villages of: Beanacre, Berryfield, Bowerhill, Shaw, The Spa, and Whitley, along with other rural settlements such as Sandridge.

The area has historical links. The eastern part of the parish, bounded by the Avon to the west and the Semington Brook to the south, was once part of the royal forest of Melksham whose bounds were first set in 1228.

Melksham Without Parish boundary map:



The proposed site PL/2026/01555 (BDW Trading Ltd) sees Phase 1 Reserve Matters for 229 of 500 dwellings approved at Outline PL/2023/11188 with a S106 Agreement for a Public Art Contribution in place.



## Contribution and trigger

### “Public Art Contribution”

means the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds (£150,000) made up of three hundred pounds (£300) per Residential Unit Index Linked to be paid by the Owners to the Council towards the delivery of integrating public art within the Development or within the vicinity of the Development with no more than 10% of the Public Arts Contribution to be used towards the development of an Arts Scheme

At 500 residential units, the first 50% of the contribution is made prior to occupation of first residential unit. With the remaining 50% made prior to occupation of 250<sup>th</sup> residential unit.

Where the S106 Contribution wording ties the payment amount to a per dwelling formula, this would equate to **£68,700 for 229 dwellings** made prior to occupation of first residential unit.

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## Background

The provision of public art is justified as a proportionate and necessary measure to both mitigate the impact of development, and support its successful integration.

Public art provides a means of embedding locally responsive elements that can reflect the area’s history, culture and environment, helping development to feel assimilated rather than imposed.

Our guidance on public art was adopted by Cabinet in 2024, and the Council is able to demonstrate a robust methodology benchmarked against several other authorities. There is an identified specific site-based requirement as a result of this development, and we can point to several appeals where public art contributions have been found compliant and secured.

You will also note the recent Secretary of State decision - dated 28 July 2026 - re: PL/2024/07097 - Land South of Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, SN12 7QP - APP/Y3940/W/25/3373278, which agrees with the submitted CIL compliance statement which makes reference to the public art contribution (as does the agreed S106):

### Planning obligations

32. The Secretary of State has had regard to the Inspector's analysis at IR12.76-12.80, the planning obligation dated 5 February 2026, paragraph 58 of the Framework, the Guidance and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010, as amended. For the reasons given at IR12.79, she agrees with the Inspector's conclusion that the obligation complies with Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 and the tests at paragraph 58 of the Framework.

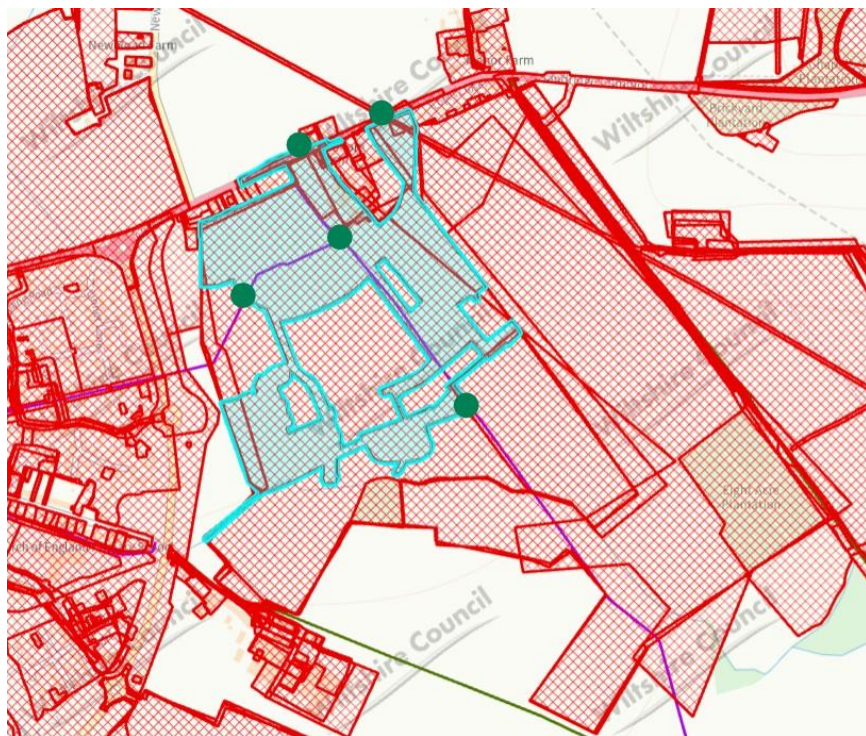
Public Art contributions provide a policy compliant mechanism that will help to mitigate the impact of this development – and the merge of Melksham Without Parish with Melksham Town - while also assisting integration with existing and incoming communities.

This is essential in the context of Melksham Without to create sense of place and so as not to undermine community cohesion with regards to WCS CP57 & NPPF para. 96 and para. 98.

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## Public Art Scheme

I have identified potential locations along the boundary of the proposed site and where it connects with a Right of Way, which could assist with intergration, community cohesion, place-shaping, and enable a scheme that is accessible to as many of the existing and new residents as possible:



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## Contribution calculation

To provide a consistent, sustainable and transparent approach for our Public Art programme, our communities and Developers, Wiltshire Council has held its 'fixed per dwelling' figure since its implementation in 2009.

The 2009 figure was calculated\* using the internationally established Public Art funding mechanism, Percent for Art\*\* i.e. up to 1% of capital costs derived from an average build cost per residential dwelling in England. In this case, taking a conservative approach of 0.5% and the lower end of a typical standard newbuild.

*[\*build cost per dwelling (RICS) x average floor space per dwelling (English Housing Survey) = lower end of average cost per dwelling (c£60,000 in 2009) x 0.5%*

*\*\*Percent for Art is an internationally established funding mechanism implemented by authorities, development corporations and housing associations for the commissioning of public art. Normal practice is for up to 1% of capital costs to be allocated for public art]*

## Summary

Public art is widely recognised within the planning system as a key component of place-making, contributing to distinctive, higher quality environments that go beyond purely functional design and instead create places that reflect local identity and aspirations.

Public art also plays an important role in supporting community cohesion and well-being by creating shared spaces and experiences that bring together existing and new residents, acting as a bridge between communities and helping to foster a sense of belonging.

Community involvement in the delivery of public art schemes encourages participation and dialogue, strengthening social connections, and helping communities adapt to change.

More broadly, it supports and contributes to civic pride, legibility and the usability of public spaces, while reinforcing a shared identity and delivering long-term social value.

As such, public art should not be viewed as decorative but as a legitimate planning tool that supports the assimilation of new development, and the creation of cohesive, inclusive communities.

As per our public art guidance and process, by locating public art scheme/s along the boundary of this application and one to the west and north of it, it is possible to adopt a more effective and strategic approach to aid integration and support cohesion in accordance with the WCS CP57 and the NPPF:

*To support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, the NPPF recognises ‘cultural wellbeing’ as a ‘social objective’ - one of the three overarching objectives in achieving sustainable development.*

## **2. Achieving sustainable development**

*8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

*b) a **social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being*

## **8. Promoting healthy and safe communities**

*96. Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:*

*a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*

*b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas*

*98. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

*b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community*