



CAWS objection — PL/2026/06103

Land at First Lane, Whitley, Melksham, SN12 8RL

Permission in Principle for two self-build dwellings and associated works

12 October 2026

Community Action: Whitley and Shaw (CAWS) **strongly objects** to this application.

This submission follows our objection dated 2 December 2025 to the previous outline application, PL/2025/08987. Moving to a Permission in Principle application does not resolve our underlying concerns about the suitability of this location for housing.

We also note that Melksham Without Parish Council has resolved to strongly object. CAWS's submission reflects the community's experience of this site and its surroundings, particularly the importance of the rural gap, recurring drainage problems, heritage and First Lane's traffic constraints.

CAWS acknowledges that a site notice has been displayed, but regrets that nearby residents, including those potentially affected by access and drainage proposals, have not been approached directly. Direct engagement would have helped bring relevant local knowledge and concerns into the assessment.

Local knowledge must inform the assessment

CAWS brings together residents' first-hand observations of this site and its surroundings over many years. These include flooding during heavy rainfall, sewer backing-up, ditch behaviour and maintenance requirements, recurring school-run congestion and additional traffic during diversions. Such conditions may not be apparent during a routine site visit. This evidence should inform the assessment alongside technical reports, with any differences between residents' documented experience and the applicant's conclusions expressly addressed.

Supporting evidence

Annex A — *Photographic evidence, flood-risk mapping, ecology and reported highway disruption* — accompanies this submission. It brings together the earlier photographs of flooding, drainage investigation and traffic congestion, details of the South Brook catchment, the previously submitted flood-risk maps, a photograph of a deer on the site taken on 7 October 2026, and reports of three recent A350 closures. These materials support the concerns set out below and should be considered alongside our December 2025 objection.

1. The rural gap is a valued part of our villages

This land contributes to the open separation between Shaw and Whitley. Its value lies in maintaining the villages' distinct identities and rural character, rather than simply providing an undeveloped space between buildings.

The site is outside the settlement boundary and within the rural gap identified in the made Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2. CAWS considers that residential development here conflicts with the purpose of Policy 19 and the plan's approach to locating development.

Two houses would introduce more than building footprints: gardens, domestic boundaries, parking, lighting and everyday residential activity would extend the developed character of the villages into the gap. Landscaping would not preserve the land's existing openness or remove those effects.

2. Community-supported planning should guide the location of growth

CAWS supports appropriately located housing that meets local needs. The neighbourhood plan provides a community-supported framework for accommodating development while protecting the qualities residents value.

This site is not allocated for housing. Our previous submission highlighted the housing already provided for through neighbourhood-plan allocations, commitments and completions. The Council should assess the proposal against that planned provision and explain the weight it gives to the neighbourhood plan's settlement and rural-gap policies.

The description of the homes as self-build should not, by itself, establish that this particular countryside location is suitable. Any housing benefits must be weighed against the harm arising from the location.

3. Residents' flooding evidence requires a substantive response

The watercourse map in Annex A illustrates the extensive network through and around Whitley and Shaw. Residents' local knowledge identifies the application site and nearby land as an area where several drainage routes converge. This reinforces the need to assess the site within its wider catchment, including incoming flows, the capacity of receiving ditches and watercourses, and downstream effects. An assessment confined to runoff generated within the application boundary would not adequately address these concerns.

Our December 2025 submission documented flooding at the site entrance and on First Lane, including a photograph taken on 4 January 2024. It also reported sewer backing-up during the storm of 16–17 November 2025, placing nearby properties at risk.

These accounts provide local evidence of how the drainage system behaves during heavy rainfall. They should be considered alongside modelling and flood-risk mapping, with any differences explained. The flooding photograph and others, and previously submitted maps, are reproduced in Annex A.

The Council should establish whether the proposed development can be accommodated without increasing risk to existing homes, the highway, Shaw School, or downstream communities, and whether safe access can be achieved during flood events.

The Government's announcement of a Flood and Drought Resilience Taskforce on 11 October 2026 emphasises the importance of affected communities' lived experience in informing flood resilience. CAWS considers that this reinforces the need for the Council to address residents' documented flooding evidence and assess the site within the wider South Brook catchment, including future flood risk.

Where unresolved flood risk bears on the suitability of the location for residential development, it should inform the Permission in Principle decision.

4. Drainage changes must not transfer problems to neighbours

Our previous objection raised particular concerns about a proposed new watercourse along the boundary of Lagard House. If this remains part of the intended development, its implications require clear assessment.

Residents need assurance about outfall capacity, effects on neighbouring land and buildings, maintenance access and responsibility for the drainage system over its lifetime. Our earlier submission also identified concerns about access to the existing ditch and reported maintenance rights benefiting neighbouring properties.

Residents' knowledge of existing ditch behaviour and maintenance arrangements should inform that assessment. Any proposed solution must be workable in practice, including during prolonged or intense rainfall.

Annex A includes a photograph of drainage investigation adjacent to the site entrance on 14 August 2025 and provides context for the concerns residents have raised.

The current application should make clear which drainage proposals from the earlier scheme remain relevant. The Council should not assume that an acceptable solution is available without understanding any constraints that could affect the principle of development.

5. First Lane's existing conditions and wider traffic pressures matter

First Lane is narrow in places and experiences school-run parking, congestion and difficult bus movements. Annex A includes the photograph taken on 17 July 2025 showing conditions near the site entrance.

Although two homes would generate a limited amount of traffic, their effects must be assessed in the context of the actual access conditions, pedestrian movements and periods of greatest congestion. Residents' observations of these recurring conditions should inform the assessment; a visit outside school-run periods may not capture them.

Residents also face construction traffic and disruption from other housing, cable, renewable-energy, battery-storage and substation works. The Council should consider relevant cumulative pressures on the local road network rather than assessing this proposal in isolation.

Residents report that roads through Shaw and Whitley regularly accommodate diverted traffic associated with construction works and disruption on the A350. The frequency of recent disruption is illustrated by three separately reported A350 closures on 29 September, 1 October and 6 October 2026, documented in Annex A.

Those reports confirm the closures but do not identify diversion routes through Shaw, Whitley or First Lane. Residents' observations of the resulting local traffic pressures should nevertheless inform the assessment of cumulative highway conditions, access safety and construction routing.

The Minister for Roads confirmed on 8 October 2026 that the A350 Melksham Bypass has been removed from the Major Road Network and Large Local Majors Programme. Potential relief from the bypass cannot therefore be assumed when assessing this application. Existing congestion, disruption and residents' reported diversion pressures through Shaw and Whitley remain unresolved, reinforcing the need to assess the proposal against current highway conditions and cumulative traffic pressures.

6. Open land contributes to local heritage

Our previous submission identified concerns about the settings of Lagard House, 120 First Lane and The Malt House.

The assessment should explain how the surrounding open land contributes to the significance and rural setting of these listed buildings, and other non-designated heritage assets, and what would change

through residential development. Effects may arise from domestic activity, lighting, boundaries and drainage works as well as the houses themselves.

Any conclusion that the proposal would cause no heritage harm should be supported by an independent assessment that addresses those relationships.

7. The site is used by wildlife

A photograph in Annex A shows a deer on the application site on 7 October 2026.

This is just one sighting out of many and provides direct evidence that wildlife uses the land.

The Council should consider the site's relationship with adjoining vegetation, hedgerows and watercourses, including its potential role in wildlife movement. Residential boundaries, lighting and changes to land management could affect that use. These considerations reinforce the need to understand the site's existing function before accepting its conversion to housing.

Conclusion

CAWS requests that Permission in Principle be refused.

Our central objection concerns the suitability of this location: development would extend residential activity into open countryside and the protected rural gap, with unresolved concerns about flooding, drainage, traffic, ecology and heritage.

The Council should expressly address the evidence submitted by residents and CAWS, including Annex A and our December 2025 objection, and identify whether the current proposal resolves any of those concerns.

The Council should demonstrate how residents' local evidence has informed its decision, identifying which concerns have been resolved, which remain outstanding and the evidence supporting those conclusions.

The small number of dwellings does not remove the need to protect village separation or establish that this is an acceptable location for housing.

This submission has been endorsed by the Community Emergency Group (CEG).

Supporting material and references:

Annex A — Photographic evidence, flood-risk mapping, ecology and highway disruption. Photographs have been supplied by CEG and local residents.

CAWS objection dated 2 December 2025 to PL/2025/08987.

Planning appeal 6003438 — Land south of 214B Corsham Road, Whitley.

Planning appeal 6007352 — Land east of New Road, Melksham.

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 2020-2038.

DEFRA announcement of 11 October 2026. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8040n4v7126o>

Letter from Justin Madders MP, Minister for Roads, to Brian Mathew MP dated 8 October 2026.

A1. Watercourse network around Whitley and Shaw

A map of the Whitley area in Wiltshire, England. The River Great Ouse is shown in blue, flowing from the north towards the south. The map includes various locations such as Wadswick Green, Neston, Whitley, Shaw, Melksham, and Melksham Forest. A red arrow points to the location of the site near Shaw. A text box on the right side of the map states: "Approx. location of the site".

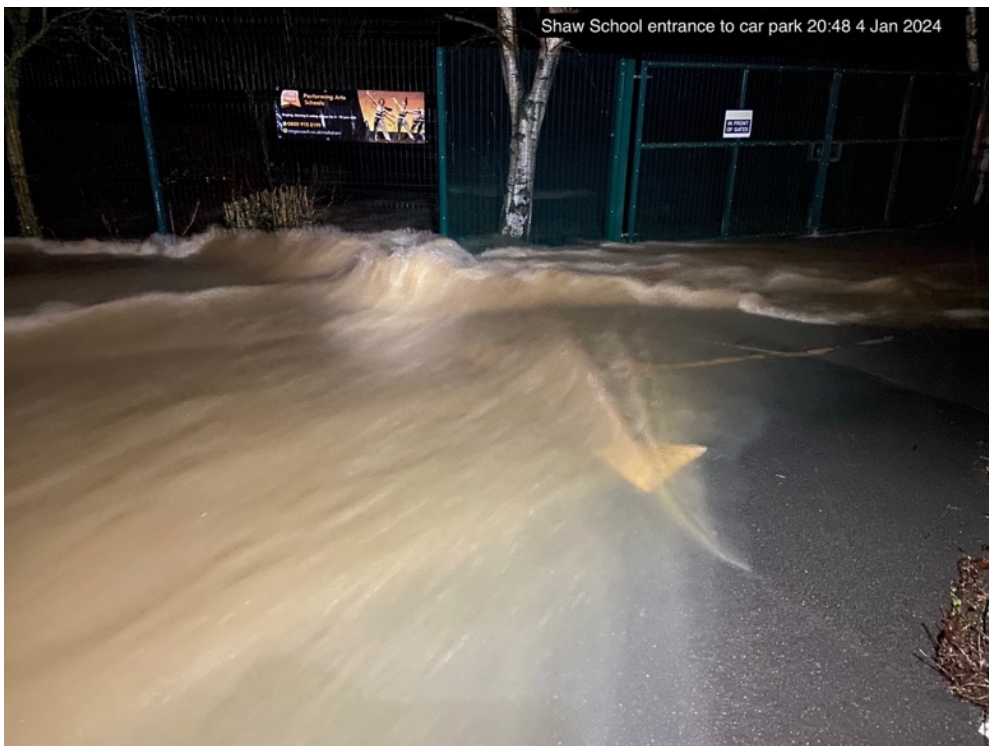
A2. Flooding at the site entrance and First Lane — 4 January 2024

A3. Flooding on Corsham Road and First Lane – 4 January 2024

Photograph showing the flooding on Corsham Road and the junction with First Lane (by the Triangle Sign)



A4. Photograph showing the flooding at Shaw School associated with South Brook. Residents report that water reaching this area flows across the application site.



A5. Photograph showing the extent of Flooding on First Lane to the north of the site.



A6. Previously submitted flood-risk mapping

Maps reproduced from CAWS's December 2025 objection, showing the current surface-water flood risk and the projected risk for 2040–2060. These are the maps used in that submission, rather than a newly obtained assessment.

The reproduced government surface-water flood-risk maps show existing mapped risk affecting the site and a projected increase in its extent between 2040 and 2060.





The surface water risk between 2040 and 2060.

A7. Drainage investigation adjacent to the site entrance — 14 August 2025

Photograph showing drainage investigation near the site entrance. The photograph records the activity; it does not itself establish the nature or cause of any drainage problem.



A8. Traffic congestion near the site entrance — 17 July 2025

Photograph showing school-run traffic conditions on First Lane near the application site.



A9. Wildlife using the application site — 7 October 2026

Photograph showing a deer on the site. This provides evidence of wildlife use, without establishing a protected habitat or the site's overall ecological importance.



A10. Reported A350 closures, 29 September–6 October 2026

Incident date	Reported closure	Source
29 September 2026, around 3pm	Serious collision north of Beanacre, near Lacock. A350 closed between Leekes Roundabout and Lackham Roundabout.	Wiltshire 999s, “Serious crash shuts A350 in both directions for ‘foreseeable future’” , published 29 September 2026.
1 October 2026, morning	Collision at Lacock. A350 closed in both directions between Whitehall Garden Centre junction and Beanacre. The report records traffic diverting through Lacock, causing delays.	Wiltshire 999s, “A350 closed in both directions as air ambulance lands for crash” , published 1 October 2026.
6 October 2026, shortly before 8pm	Car and motorcycle collision at the A365 Shurnhold junction. A350 closed in both directions between Beanacre and Farmers Roundabout.	Wiltshire 999s, “Motorcyclist seriously injured in A350 junction crash in Melksham” , published 7 October 2026.

These reports confirm three separate A350 closures between 29 September and 6 October 2026. Residents report that A350 disruption, together with highway and construction works, increases traffic through Shaw and Whitley and their narrow lanes.