



# Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2038

**Referendum  
Version**

## Foreword

*Welcome to the Semington Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan.*

*In 2021, Semington Parish Council decided after considerable debate to use the 2011 Localism Act to work with Wiltshire Council to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Such plans give local people and communities more say about the scale and nature of future development where they live. It fits within both the national strategic planning policy and within Wiltshire's Core Strategy.*

*The Semington Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan relates to the whole of the parish and touches on a wide range of issues of local importance. These include community facilities, green space and infrastructure, housing, employment, our unique built heritage, highways, and the protection of biodiversity and habitats. This reflects community-wide comments, observations and concerns about our future, bringing them together with census information, strategic and statistical evidence that represents the community's overwhelming desire to make Semington Parish an even better place to live and work, both now and for future generations.*

*The plan has been produced by a Neighbourhood Development Planning Steering Group made up of Parish Councillors and community volunteers. The Steering Group worked with consultants Place Studio and a wider group of critical friends from the parish. It engaged in a range of formal and informal community consultations. It is the Parish Council's intention that the Semington Neighbourhood Development Plan, working within the Wiltshire Core Strategy, will become the starting point for deciding where and if development should take place, together with the type and quality of that development. In doing this we're setting out to protect the parish from uncontrolled or poorly placed development, and ensure that any development is sympathetic to and improves the look and feel of the parish.*

*It took some time and considerable debate for the Parish Council to be convinced of the need for Semington to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan, but since we took that decision in 2021, the Council has been fully supportive of it, and thinks that the Plan is a document that the Council will be able to use to make decisions that parishioners can rely on as it represents a broad consensus of local opinion about Semington's future.*

*I'd like to express sincere thanks to everybody who has contributed to the creation of our Plan.*

**Peter Smith**

**Semington Parish Council Chair (2020 – 2024)**

## Summary – Quick Read

### What am I looking at?

This is the Referendum version of the Semington Neighbourhood Development Plan. It has been produced following many months of public meetings, consultations, research and surveys, so we hope it reflects how our community wants to see the parish developing in future.

### What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan, and why do we want one?

A Neighbourhood Development Plan (also referred to as a Neighbourhood Plan) describes how we want our parish to develop, and it has real legal clout in planning terms giving us a strong voice in planning decisions that affect us.

### What is in our Neighbourhood Plan?

We have a set of planning policies – rules and guidelines that describe what we want to see in development that needs planning permission – grouped in 5 topics:

- |                             |                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Rural Living and Working  | 4 Community Facilities              |
| 2 Environment and Wellbeing | 5 Sustainability and Climate Change |
| 3 Housing and Development   |                                     |

Each policy specifies our view on a particular aspect of development, such as protecting the natural environment and our lovely landscape, setting out where we do and do not support further housing development or supporting small scale employment.

### What stage is it at?

Building on all the work that has been done to date, this Plan is now submitted to Wiltshire Council for a referendum when the people who live in our Parish will vote on whether to accept the Plan. Wiltshire Council will inform all parishioners about the referendum process.

The Steering Group will be keeping people updated via the Parish newsletter, website and social media. You can also ask us any questions by using [the contact form](#) on the Parish Council website: [semington.org.uk/contact](http://semington.org.uk/contact)

## Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Thinking about Development in Semington	9
3	Planning Context	11
4	About Semington Parish	14
5	Vision and Objectives	18
6	Land Use Planning Policies	20
	POLICY SEM 1: Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	20
	POLICY SEM 2: Support for Rural Businesses and Workspace	21
	POLICY SEM 3: Communications Infrastructure	23
	POLICY SEM 4: Local Green Space Designation	24
	POLICY SEM 5: Public Rights of Way and Cycle Network	26
	POLICY SEM 6: Green Blue Infrastructure and Nature Recovery	28
	POLICY SEM 7: Protecting Semington's Rural Landscape	29
	POLICY SEM 8: Design and Local Distinctiveness	33
	POLICY SEM 9: Pre-application Community Engagement	37
	POLICY SEM 10: Land to the west of Turnpike Close (the Auction Field)	38
	POLICY SEM 11: Community Facilities	42
	POLICY SEM 12: Sustainable Construction	43
	POLICY SEM 13: Standalone Renewable Energy Generation	45
7	Neighbourhood Planning Steps	46
	Appendix	
	Pre-application Engagement Protocol	47

*This document has been prepared by the Semington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, with professional advice and support from Place Studio Ltd, on behalf of the community of Semington Parish and the Parish Council.*

*This is the referendum version of the Neighbourhood Plan and together with its associated documentation is to be used for its intended purpose only.*

*Base map credit (where not stated otherwise): © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100065124) 2023, Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 How can the community of Semington have a say in the future development of our parish? Those that live or work here in Semington value its community spirit, local facilities, its actively rural character and the beautiful natural environment. With recent development and permissions, and as we emerge from the pandemic and look ahead to the future, we need to take a proactive approach to protecting our valued assets whilst addressing the challenges of climate change and the need for homes and jobs in our parish. Our vision for future development is set out in full on page 18, and is summarised as:

***It's 2038. Semington is a great place to live, with its character and rural surroundings preserved. Small scale and sympathetic development has met a local need for facilities, housing and employment. Community life is flourishing, with facilities and services maintained or improved and precious buildings, landscapes and wildlife protected.***

- 1.2 This document is the Semington Neighbourhood Plan (also referred to as the Plan) and it is one of the tools we have to shape the future of our parish. It builds on the views of the community and on research undertaken by local representatives, and presents a vision for our area up to 2038.
- 1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan is being produced by a group of local representatives from the community, on behalf of the Parish Council, with support from our appointed Planning Consultants Place Studio and officers in Wiltshire Council.

### What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.4 The Localism Act 2011<sup>1</sup> introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development and promote better land use in their community by preparing Neighbourhood Plans. The aim of the legislation is to empower local communities to use the planning system to promote appropriate and sustainable development in their area.
- 1.5 Neighbourhood Plans must meet a number of legal requirements: they must have appropriate regard to national policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework;<sup>2</sup> they must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Wiltshire Local Development Plan and must also satisfy a number of other basic conditions ensuring it contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 1.6 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations set out a number of formal steps that must be taken in preparing this Neighbourhood Plan. This includes two rounds of consultation, as well as independent examination and a parish referendum where our community can vote to approve it. If more than 50% of those who vote approve the Plan, it will be adopted – the formal term is ‘made’ – and the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Wiltshire Development Plan and be used for determining planning

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20>

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65829e99fc07f3000d8d4529/NPPF\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65829e99fc07f3000d8d4529/NPPF_December_2023.pdf)

applications in Semington Parish.

- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan provides a significant opportunity for local people to influence planning decisions, as planning applications are determined ‘in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise’.<sup>3</sup>

### **Why produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Semington Parish?**

- 1.8 A Neighbourhood Plan for Semington Parish will give those who live and work here a positive and proactive format to influence planning and development decisions.
- 1.9 Each stage of the Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan process to date has aimed to build a clear understanding of local community views together with locally produced evidence all set within the context of national and Wiltshire Council planning policy. The Neighbourhood Plan brings together these elements to inform a local approach to development over the coming years.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Area**

- 1.10 Semington Civic Parish was designated by Wiltshire Council as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of creating a Neighbourhood Plan on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 under the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan area follows the Parish Council boundary as shown on Map 1 below.

*Map 1: Semington Parish Designated Neighbourhood Area*



---

<sup>3</sup> Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Section 38 (6).

## How does this Plan reflect the views of our community?

1.11 The Steering Group was formed in September 2021, after Semington Parish Council resolved to develop a Neighbourhood Plan following feedback from summer consultation meetings in July and August 2021 to determine local interest and appetite. These were well attended and demonstrated an enthusiasm by the community to develop its own Neighbourhood Plan.

1.12 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by local volunteers supported by the Parish Council and specialist consultants. Care has been taken to build up a clear picture and evidence base of local issues and ambitions, issues and opportunities. This has been done through two key methods:

- Seeking and recording the views of our community
- Research and Analysis



1.13 A full account of the informal consultation undertaken in developing the Plan can be found in the Consultation Statement, which is available on the Parish Council website.<sup>4</sup> Regular communication with the parish took place through the monthly parish

newsletter, the village Facebook account and the village website. In addition, there were open consultation events held in March 2022 and April 2023 at the village hall, and surveys of key community members (such as businesses) and consultations on key topics such as climate change were carried out throughout the period. A formal consultation (known as Regulation 14) on a pre-submission version of the Plan was held in February and March 2024.

1.14 The vision, aims and policies that are set out in this Plan come directly from the views and opinions gathered through consultation and

### ***How the Neighbourhood Plan is Prepared – Timeline***

1. *Defining the Neighbourhood Plan Area*
2. *Preparing the Plan (this is what we have been working for around two years)*
3. *Formal 6 week consultation (Regulation 14 – Feb/March 2024)*
4. *Make changes and revisions in response to the consultation*
5. *Submit to Wiltshire Council*
6. *Formal 6 week consultation (Regulation 16)*
7. *Examination*
8. *Referendum*
9. *Legal Force*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.semington.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

through work to generate local evidence.

- 1.15 The process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan has a number of stages as set out in the box on the previous page. Stage 2 is a key stage where we gathered community feedback, together with local information and evidence, to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan that both reflects our community aspirations and is robust within the planning system.

### **What else has informed this Neighbourhood Plan?**

- 1.16 The Neighbourhood Plan is based on robust information and analysis of the local area; this 'Evidence Base' is available in full on the Parish Council website.<sup>5</sup> The evidence base was prepared by members of the community and the Steering Group together with professional support from Wiltshire Council, from consultants Place Studio and Landscape Architect Fiona Sharman, and from Aecom through grant funding available from the government to enable communities to provide robust Neighbourhood Plans. This means that our Neighbourhood Plan is underpinned by evidence of community opinion, research and analysis.

The key evidence base reports include:

- Landscape and Visual Sensitivity report (Fiona Sharman Landscape Architect 2022)
- Semington Key Views Report (Place Studio & SNPSG 2022)
- Semington Local Green Space Report (Place Studio & SNPSG 2023)
- Semington Parish Character Statement (SNPSG 2023)
- Site Options and Assessment Report (Aecom 2022)
- AECOM Strategic Environmental Assessment (Aecom 2024)
- Viability opinion for allocation of Auction Field (SEM10) Semington (Bailey Vennings 2024)

A Pre-application Engagement Protocol has also been prepared with the aim of enabling early and positive engagement with our community on any development proposals. This is included as an appendix to this Plan.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.semington.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

## 2. Thinking about Development in Semington

- 2.1 To enable the community to reach an informed decision about how the Neighbourhood Plan can shape the future development of the village and the wider parish, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group built up a detailed picture of local information which informs our approach to shaping how the village and the wider parish develops over the coming years. Key aspects of this are summarised below.

### Landscape and Green Spaces

- 2.2 There are green spaces, and areas of high landscape sensitivity in the parish, that by virtue of their value and function warrant safeguarding/protection. The Plan includes policies to protect these valued aspects of the parish.

### Recent Housing Activity

- 2.3 Houses built + permission granted between 2020 and December 2024 = 70. The levels of recent development and permissions in the parish have already exceeded the proposed neighbourhood area housing requirement of 53 in the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review for housing growth in Semington village looking ahead to 2038. It is noted however that this is provided as an 'indicative' figure and development proposals are considered in a wider area context – not just a parish context. Neighbourhood Planning communities are encouraged by the government to plan to exceed their housing requirement where possible and the Local Plan makes clear that, through Neighbourhood Plans, communities can potentially allocate site(s) 'should a local need be identified'. If the Neighbourhood Plan allocates housing government policy gives much weight to the Plan in decision making on any applications not allocated in either the Wiltshire or Semington Plan – as a way to stop 'speculative' off-plan housing outside the settlement boundary. This is a significant advantage of allocating land for housing provided there is a suitable site that the community supports. This will maximise parish control of future development. Allocating a housing site could also bring other benefits to the village delivered alongside the housing – such as a shop, which has long been discussed in the village.

### Housing Need and Land Availability

- 2.4 Although there is no requirement to allocate housing in our Neighbourhood Plan – our community decides what goes in it – there is ongoing development pressure. The Steering Group therefore felt it important to consider and review potential development sites in the Plan area with a particular focus on what benefits development could offer. From an assessment of available sites,<sup>6</sup> we know there are 4 available and potentially suitable sites that can be considered for allocation as housing sites in the Neighbourhood Plan. These 4 sites were presented to the community for informal consultation in April 2023 and there was clear support for allocation, and clear preference for one site (Site 1, west of Semington Turnpike and north of the A361) over the other three available and

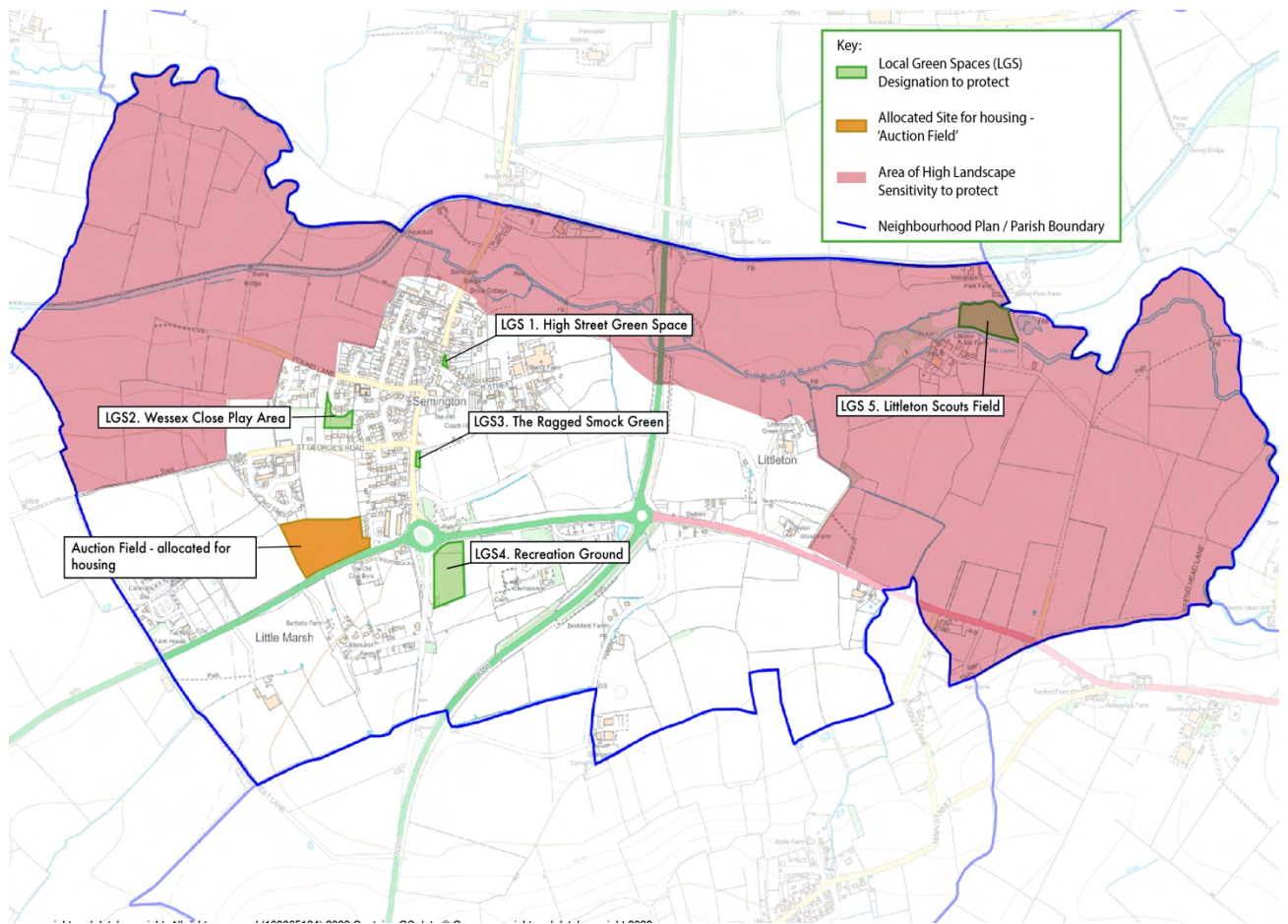
---

<sup>6</sup> Site Options and Assessment Report (Aecom 2022). Available on the Parish Council website: <https://www.semington.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

potentially suitable sites. This site was also assessed more favourably than all other sites in the AECOM Site Options and Assessment Report. It is therefore included as an allocation in this Plan as it also had clear support from the community. In responses to Regulation 14 consultation it was backed by 79 per cent of respondents.

- 2.5 See Policy SEM10 on page 38 for allocation, and the Consultation Statement for more information on the consultation that has taken place to date on the allocation. Map 2 sets out our overall development approach.

Map 2: Overall Development Approach



### 3. Planning Context

- 3.1. As a planning document, this Neighbourhood Plan is required to operate within the context set out by the National Planning Policy Framework (referred to from here on as the NPPF),<sup>7</sup> most recently updated in December 2023 and National Planning Practice Guidance.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.2. National planning policy addresses a wide range of issues that are relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan. The most significant are the overall requirement to deliver sustainable development, and the requirement to be in ‘general conformity’ with local level strategic policy – in our case this is the Wiltshire Council Local Plan.

***What is meant by sustainable development?***

*Sustainable development is commonly defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In planning terms this covers development in three main areas; social, economic and environmental issues.*

#### **Wiltshire Council Planning Context**

- 3.3. Being in ‘general conformity’ with the strategic planning policies of Wiltshire Council means that our Plan needs to be broadly in accordance with Wiltshire’s Core Strategy / emerging Local Plan for Wiltshire, and within that context, to provide an additional local level of detail to guide and enable future change and development in Semington.
- 3.4. Wiltshire Council is currently reviewing the Wiltshire Core Strategy,<sup>9</sup> which will be renamed the Wiltshire Local Plan. A review is necessary because the Government requires local planning authorities to revisit their Local Plans every five years and review as necessary. The Local Plan will set out an overall strategy for Wiltshire to meet housing, employment, leisure and other needs up to 2038, along with the infrastructure for transport, community facilities, as well as conservation and enhancement priorities for the built and natural environment. A draft Local Plan was consulted upon in Autumn 2023, with submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination expected to be in Q4 of 2024 and adoption of the Plan aimed for by the end quarter 3 of 2025 according to the Wiltshire Council Local Development Scheme, March 2024.
- 3.5. Our Neighbourhood Plan will run concurrently with the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan time frame; covering the period until 2038. This is a long time period, and it is recognised that the context, and related needs, aspirations, challenges and concerns of the local community may change over the Plan period and that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be reviewed and updated before 2038.

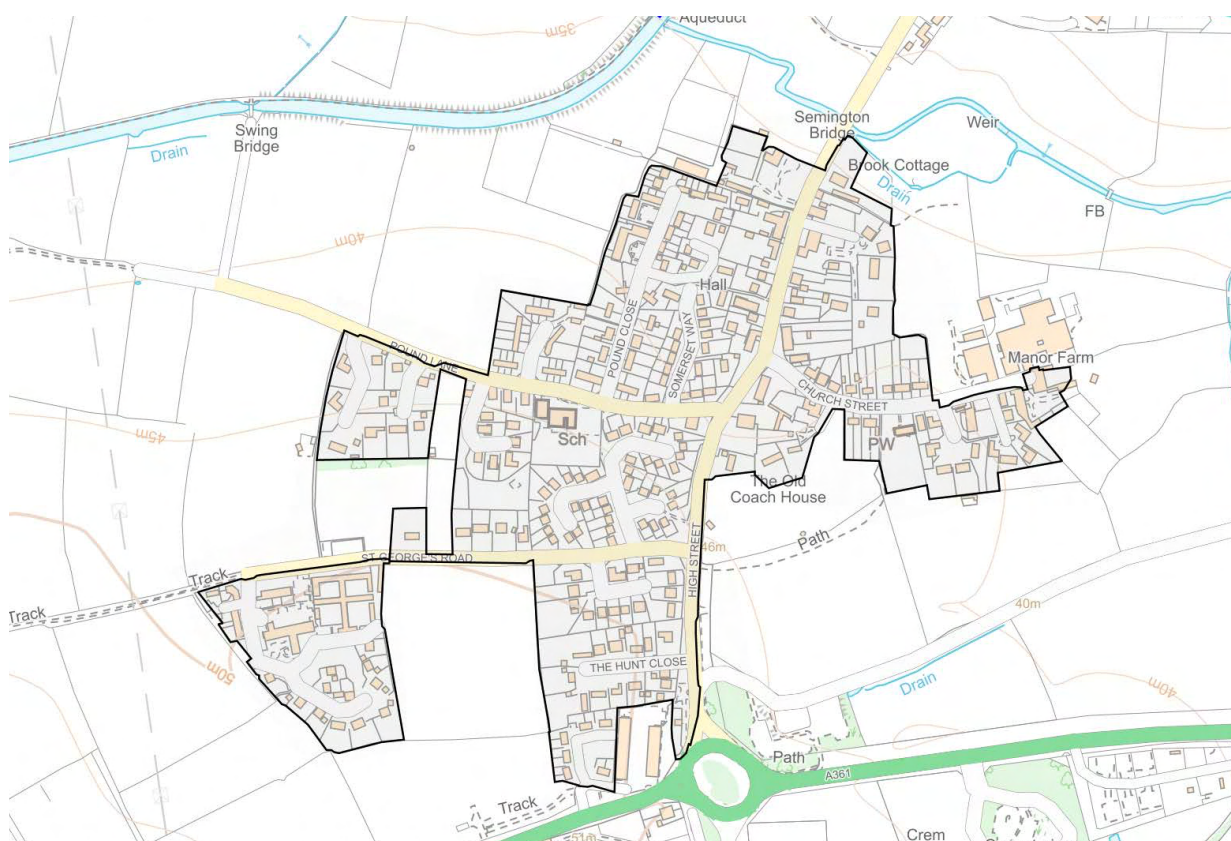
<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65829e99fc07f3000d8d4529/NPPF\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65829e99fc07f3000d8d4529/NPPF_December_2023.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-guidance-portal>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/372/Wiltshire-Core-Strategy-adopted-2015/pdf/Wcs.pdf?m=637099399373530000>

3.6. The Wiltshire Core Strategy identifies Semington village as a ‘Large Village’,<sup>10</sup> meaning it has a ‘limited range of employment, services and facilities’. Wiltshire Council therefore has also defined a settlement boundary, within which proposals for sustainable development are supported in principle (see Map 3). However, the Core Strategy states that any development at ‘Large Villages’ will be limited to that needed to help meet the housing needs of settlements and to improve employment opportunities, services and facilities. Outside of the settlement boundary the rest of the parish is ‘open countryside’ in planning terms. Proposals for improved local employment opportunities, housing growth (over and above that allowed by the Core Strategy) and/or new services and facilities outside the defined limits of development will not be supported unless proposed through Neighbourhood Plans. The strategy does, however, allow for carefully managed development outside of settlement boundaries in specific cases, such as new employment investment where there is an overriding strategic interest, or for other local circumstances such as providing affordable housing, allowing new tourist accommodation or supporting diversification of the rural economy’.

*Map 3: Semington Settlement Boundary (2024) shown as the black line around the built area*



<sup>10</sup> In the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy (p. 43) Large Villages are defined as settlements with a limited range of employment, services and facilities.

- 3.7. In order to support the government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes across the country, the NPPF requires that Local Planning Authorities establish a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas.
- 3.8. As mentioned above, the emerging draft Wiltshire Local Plan<sup>11</sup> was published for consultation in the Autumn 2023. Of particular relevance for Semington is a neighbourhood area housing requirement for 53 dwellings<sup>12</sup> during the Plan period up to 2038. At the time of writing, in the current period (2020 to 2038) 25 new houses have been built and occupied, there is full planning permission for 19 additional houses, and outline planning permission for a further 26. This is a total of 70; 37 of these are affordable homes. Though the overall requirement has been met and exceeded – this is not considered a ceiling and the Local Plan makes clear that through Neighbourhood Plans, communities can potentially allocate site(s) ‘should a local need be identified’.

### **Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

- 3.9. Semington Parish Council, as the Neighbourhood Plan Qualifying Body, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Plan to ensure its relevance and to monitor its delivery.
- 3.10. The Semington Neighbourhood Plan adds local detail to supplement national and Wiltshire planning policies and ensures a responsive and positive community input into the planning system. An application to Wiltshire Council for the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan Area was approved on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2021. Map 1 on 6 shows that this covers the whole of Semington parish.
- 3.11. Once agreed at a referendum and officially ‘made’ (brought into legal force by the local planning authority), a neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as the strategic (Wiltshire) Local Plan, and will sit within the Development Plan for Wiltshire providing local level planning policies for Semington parish.

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=108824#mgDocuments>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/11432/Rural-Settlement-Housing-Requirements-Distribution-Outputs-2023/pdf/Rural\\_Settlement\\_Housing\\_Requirements\\_\\_Distribution\\_Methodology\\_\\_Outputs\\_2023\\_osv5udx8vzgb.pdf?m=638239969492700000](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/11432/Rural-Settlement-Housing-Requirements-Distribution-Outputs-2023/pdf/Rural_Settlement_Housing_Requirements__Distribution_Methodology__Outputs_2023_osv5udx8vzgb.pdf?m=638239969492700000)

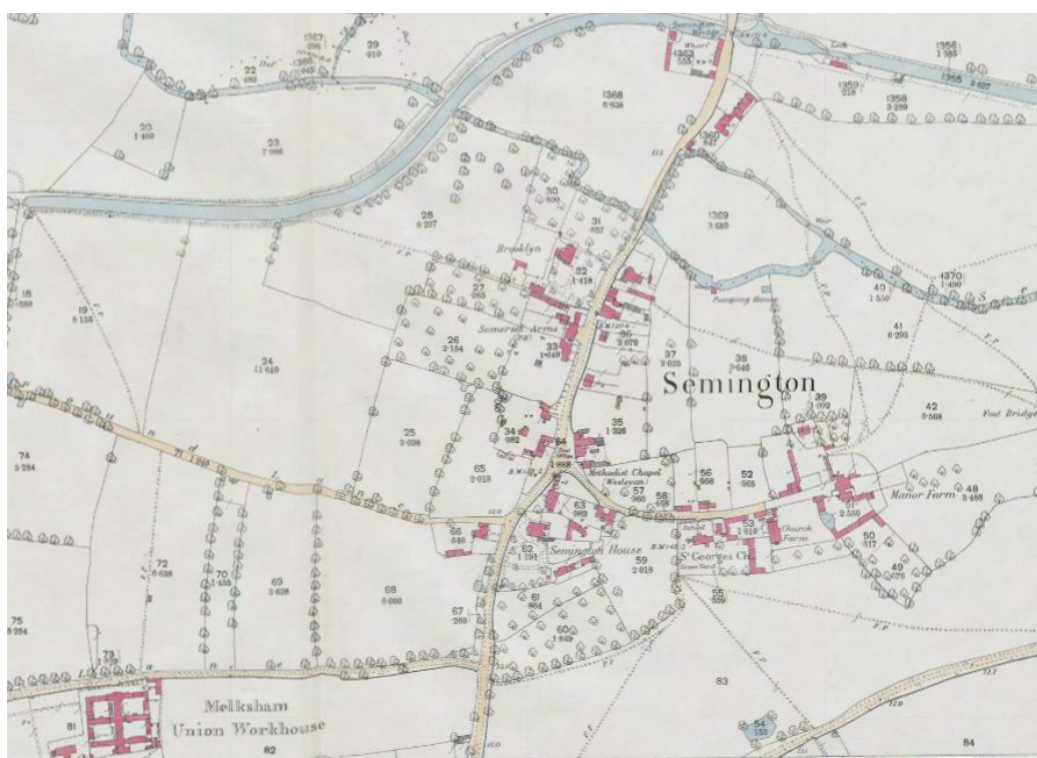
## 4 About Semington Parish

*'Under elms near Semington the threshing-machine boomed, its unchanging note mingled with a hiss at the addition of each sheaf. Otherwise the earth was the rooks', heaven was the larks', and I rode easily on along the good level road somewhere in between the two'<sup>13</sup>.*

### A Brief History of Semington

- 4.1 Semington is an old settlement and people have lived here since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The parish sits in the valley of Semington Brook, which rises on Salisbury Plain and joins the River Avon at Whaddon. The Brook has been the northern boundary of the parish for centuries and formed part of the southern border of the Forests of Chippenham and Melksham that date from 1228.

Map 4: Wiltshire Tithe Map 1881 (Map Credit – Swindon and Wiltshire Archives<sup>14</sup>)



- 4.2 During the Second World War, Semington lay on an important anti-invasion line of defence. An anti-tank trench was dug around the south of the village, starting at Semington Brook to the east and ending at the canal to the west. Concrete bollards and pillboxes were also built and the remains of a few of these are still visible and an important part of our local and national history. The Parish Council website details Semington's importance in WW II defences.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Edward Thomas was commissioned to take a bicycle ride from London to the Quantocks, and to write a book about it. The book: *"In Pursuit of Spring"* was published in April 1914. In Chapter VI, after leaving Trowbridge, Thomas passes the Lion and Fiddle at Hilperton and then wrote the passage quoted.

<sup>14</sup> Sourced from the historic map website <https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?edition=wilts>

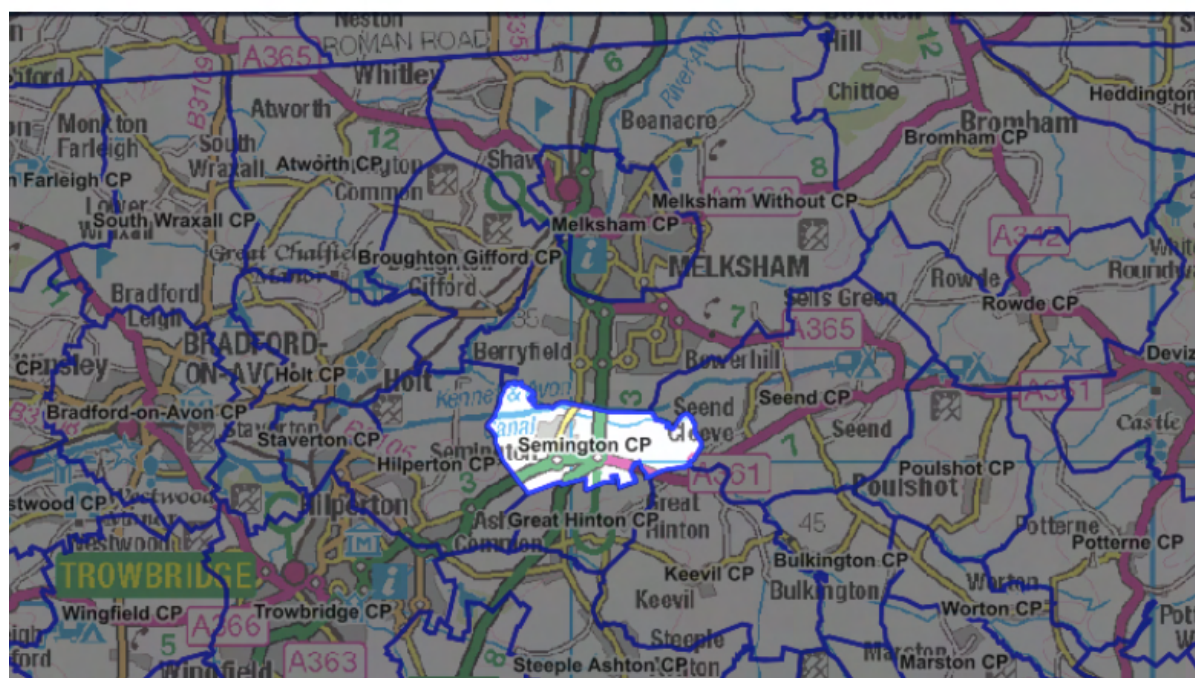
<sup>15</sup> <https://www.semington.org.uk/heritage-and-history>

4.3 A prominent parish feature is the Kennet & Avon Canal. This was begun in 1794 in order to provide a navigable link between Newbury and Bath. The section from Foxhangers (below Devizes) to Bath, including the construction of a wharf at Semington, was completed by 1804 and the canal was opened throughout its length in 1810. In 2002, a book called *Semington Past and Present* was produced by the Semington History Project Group, and edited by residents Gabrielle and Douglas Firmager. Copies are available from the Parish Council, and a pdf version is on the village website.<sup>16</sup> An extended history of the parish can be found on the Wiltshire Community History pages of the Wiltshire Council website.<sup>17</sup>

### The parish today

4.4 Around one thousand people live, work and go to school in the parish of Semington. It is linked by road and rights of way to the nearby towns of Bradford on Avon to the west, Devizes to the east, Melksham to the north, and Trowbridge to the southwest. These towns are important to Semington as centres of employment, commerce, transport, secondary schooling, further education, health care and leisure. Although well connected to these towns, the village is separate, and both geographically and culturally distinct from them all.

Map 5 – The parish in the wider context



4.5 The character of Semington is described by the Parish Council as actively rural. In and around the parish, there are five working farms and several other agricultural small holdings, with much of the land being used for non-intensive pasture. Semington village, which lies to the south of the Kennet & Avon Canal, was once dominated by the A350

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.semington.org.uk/Documents/Misc/Semington\\_Past\\_and\\_Present.pdf](https://www.semington.org.uk/Documents/Misc/Semington_Past_and_Present.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <https://apps.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityhistory/Community/Index/198>

running through its heart, but the opening of a bypass in 2004 provided a welcome respite, and since then the village has been actively rebuilding its rural character. The High Street is increasingly the heart and hub of the village; the place where people gather at the village hall, the pub or around the Christmas tree. The architecture of the High Street, with its attractive blend of old farmworkers' cottages, grander houses and the 18<sup>th</sup> century pub, is a key element of the rural character of the village.

- 4.6 Semington is well connected, with the A361 and A350 providing road and rural bus network links to neighbouring towns and further afield. Like many Wiltshire villages, it has multiple rural rights of way. The byway to the west and the old road to the north provide cycle, equestrian and pedestrian access to Trowbridge (via Hilperton) and Melksham respectively. The canal and its towpath also offer pedestrian and cycle access to Trowbridge, Devizes and beyond, as well as to multiple footpaths and minor roads for circular walks and cycle rides. Map 7 on page 27 shows the parish public rights of way.

- 4.7 There are over 20 clubs and other groups covering a wide range of interests. There are also multiple small businesses, from farms to garages and narrow boat servicing, to the small businesses at the Turnpike. A wide range of community institutions including the primary school, the Independent Living Centre, the church, our sports facilities, and



the Somerset Arms (closed at the time of writing) and the crematorium actively support the community and bring in visitors. The village hall, built in 1933 and recently refurbished, is at the heart of the village, both geographically and socially.

- 4.8 The relatively light agricultural use of the farmland around Semington, with much of it set to grazing and grass cropping, together with the dew ponds and the water courses of the canal and brook, provide attractive habitats for wild flora and fauna. Deer, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs, hares and rabbits are complemented by herons, kingfishers, kites, kestrels, sparrow hawk, ravens and buzzards, great crested newts, and a number of bat and owl species. Water voles and even otters have been seen in the brook, as well as less welcome mink. The canal is well stocked and draws people from afar to fish, while Semington Brook hosts a wide range of smaller fish and the occasional trout. Wildflowers are found throughout the area and ancient hedgerows are evidenced by the variety of species they host.

## Housing Development in the Village

4.9 Up to the end of the Second World War, most housing in the village was concentrated along the High Street from its junction with Pound Lane up to the Kennet & Avon Canal, and along Church Street. Other significant properties were near the old turnpike where the A361 and the old A350 now cross, and along St George’s Road at the workhouse complex. The population of the parish was in the range 400 to 500 from the 1841 census to that of 1931. Numbers then gradually increased to 930 in 2011, and the 2021 national census showed a figure of 934. This will increase as more homes are built in the village.



4.10 Council housing was added along Pound Lane after the war, with the period from the 1960s to the millennium seeing further housing development along there and along St George’s Road and Church Street. Recent times have seen further building along St George’s Road and at the Turnpike. Most of these developments have been small scale and have included affordable housing. They have also had the support of the Parish Council and villagers in response to evidence of housing need, particularly through the 2014 rural housing needs survey carried out by Wiltshire Council.<sup>18</sup>



4.11 There have also been attempts by property developers to build relatively large numbers of houses outside the village settlement boundary.<sup>19</sup> That only one of these was successful is a tribute to the determination of villagers to retain influence over how, and at what pace, their village develops. As we plan for the future there is a broadly-shared view that our priority ought to be to maintain Semington’s identity and rural feel by protecting its green spaces, wildlife and environment for the physical and mental well-being of those who live and work here now and in the future.



<sup>18</sup> A 2021 housing needs survey by Wiltshire Council showed that the affordable and market housing needed in Semington was within the current planning permissions awarded.

<sup>19</sup> For example, in 2016, proposals came forward to construct over 150 new dwellings which would have increased the housing stock by over 35%.

## 5. Vision and Objectives

- 5.1 Neighbourhood Plans set out a clear vision, set of objectives, and related planning policies. The aim is to reflect the aspirations of our community for what Semington will be like looking ahead to 2038.
- 5.2 The full vision for our Neighbourhood Plan is below:

### Vision

*The distinctive rural setting of Semington parish provides a wildlife-rich buffer between neighbouring settlements in West Wiltshire. The Kennet & Avon Canal and Semington Brook wildlife corridors and the biodiversity within them are key elements in this. In 2038, the integrity of this buffer will continue to be maintained as an asset for both people and nature.*

*Any development of the settlements of Semington, Little Marsh and Littleton will be responsive to the economic, environmental and social needs of the people living and working here. There will be minimal housing development, all within walking distance of a range of community facilities and built to the highest environmental standards, in sympathy with the existing settlements and with minimum impact on landscape settings, ecology and heritage. New housing will reflect the prime need for affordable homes and for people wishing to downsize.*

*The significant landscape perspectives within the parish along the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Brook, towards the iconic Roundway Down, and through the fields to Hilperton will be protected, being key contributors to settlement character. Green space, natural features and heritage sites will be protected and maintained, and infrastructure changes will have minimal impact on the actively rural character of the parish. The use and generation of renewable energy will increase and our community carbon footprint will be reduced.*

*In 2038, Semington will remain a place where people can move around easily and safely. Its many footpaths will have been improved, with easier access for older people and those with disabilities. Cycling access to local towns will be upgraded. The old A350 road lengths will remain restricted routes.*

*By 2038, the parish's play areas will be enhanced, the tennis court remain freely open to residents and visitors, the football pitch stay in use and the allotments will be flourishing.*

*The parish will continue to welcome a wide range of small businesses from farming (which underpins our actively rural character) to light engineering, tourism and services. More home working and businesses will be enabled through enhanced IT infrastructure. Existing community facilities – including the pub, church, school, village hall and post office – will be maintained and where possible enhanced.*

*The wide range of social groups in the parish will continue to build its community spirit, assisted by effective communications, both electronic and magazine-based.*

## Objectives

1. To maintain the parish's wildlife-rich open countryside and support farming and other businesses that determine and protect the unique setting, character and identity of Semington.
2. To provide the housing the community wants and needs in developments of appropriate size in the locations it approves and in a range of housing tenures and types, to meet the needs of young people, growing families and older residents.
3. To ensure any development is low carbon, built to a high quality and a locally distinctive design, to maintain the essential character of the settlements.
4. To celebrate and protect the Kennet & Avon Canal and Semington Brook, and the parish's significant landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, green space and cultural and heritage artifacts.
5. To retain and enhance the rights of way network and local green spaces in the parish that are of significant community value.
6. To protect and improve the recreational, sporting, social, educational and service facilities in the parish for all ages.
7. To sustain and encourage a broad range of community facilities and business.
8. To improve digital connectivity, retain the post office, and enable communications within the parish providing for all age groups.

## 6. Land Use Planning Policies

- 6.1. The planning policies included in the Plan will be used to help determine planning applications within Semington parish (our Neighbourhood Plan Area). Government guidance sets out that a policy in a Neighbourhood Plan should be: *“clear and unambiguous... It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.”*<sup>20</sup>
- 6.2. The following policies relate to the development and use of land in the designated Semington Parish Neighbourhood Area. They focus on specific planning matters that are of greatest interest to the local community.
- 6.3. There are many other policy matters that have been left to the adopted (and emerging) Wiltshire Local Plan to cover. This has avoided unnecessary repetition of policies between the two plans, though they have a mutual, helpful interdependence.
- 6.4. Planning policies are shown within a green box and in bold text, to clearly distinguish them. After each policy is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful / relevant, what evidence it draws upon and how the policy relates to other development plan policies.
- 6.5. The first policy is an overarching policy that is placed at the start of our Plan. Under the Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended)<sup>21</sup>, Wiltshire Council must consider whether any development proposals coming forward in the designated neighbourhood area are likely to have a significant effect on any environmental site that is protected at European level. There is one European site, namely the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC), that must be taken into consideration as this Plan is prepared. There is also a lesser horseshoe bat roost nearby. As the number of people living near this sensitive and irreplaceable habitat increases, impacts on the SAC must be taken into account.

### **POLICY SEM 1: Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC**

**Where appropriate, all development proposals must demonstrate compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and demonstrate how the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (2015) and the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS 2020) Supplementary Planning Document, or any subsequent iterations, have informed proposals which must avoid or reduce the potential adverse impact on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation.**

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

<sup>21</sup> The HRA has been carried out to comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

## Rural Living and Working Policies

6.6. The policies in this section help meet the following objectives:

1. To maintain the parish's wildlife-rich open countryside and support farming and other businesses that determine and protect the unique setting, character and identity of Semington.
7. To sustain and encourage a broad range of community facilities and business.
8. To improve digital connectivity, retain the post office, and enable communications within the parish providing for all age groups.

### **POLICY SEM 2: Support for Rural Businesses and Workspace**

- 1. Proposals for the expansion or diversification of existing small-scale economic enterprises will be supported, providing the proposals accord with all other relevant policies of the development plan and have no severe, residual, cumulative impact on the rural highway network.**
- 2. All new employment development should respect the character of its surroundings in terms of scale, massing, design and landscaping. It should avoid harming the inherent qualities of the surrounding area by including appropriate mitigation against any excessive noise and light pollution, and must safeguard residential amenity and road safety. Sites that are particularly sensitive due to their heritage, biodiversity or landscape sensitivity should be avoided unless any harm is adequately mitigated.**
- 3. Insofar as planning permission is required, building alterations to enable working from home will be supported provided there will be no unacceptable impact on the residential amenities of residential properties nearby.**

- 6.7. For a parish of its size, Semington is home to a surprising number of businesses. Through research<sup>22</sup> for this Plan, around 50 were identified, though several turned out to be no longer trading illustrating that any research can only be a snapshot in time. A survey was undertaken in 2022 to inform the drafting of this Plan.
- 6.8. Businesses surveyed cover a very wide range of activities, from farming to a small gin distillery to a company supplying parts worldwide for a classic British sports car. Most of the businesses are small with the majority of those who provided a figure indicating a turnover of under £250,000.
- 6.9. The 28 businesses who responded to our survey together have only 69 full-time personnel and about 51 part-timers. A small number of part-time jobs are seasonal. Of this total workforce, 18 live in the parish. The rest commute, overwhelmingly by car. The largest employer is the village school, with 14 full-time staff and three part-timers.

---

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.semington.org.uk/Documents/Neighbourhood\\_Plan/Reports/SENINGTON-NP-BUSINESS-SURVEY.pdf](https://www.semington.org.uk/Documents/Neighbourhood_Plan/Reports/SENINGTON-NP-BUSINESS-SURVEY.pdf)

The pub provided more opportunities for local people in 2022 with half its total of three full-time employees and six or seven part-timers are from the parish.

- 6.10. Premises and opportunities for small businesses, for example at the Turnpike, are important for our very local level economy, especially if they provide some sustainable employment for residents and are therefore supported in this Plan.
- 6.11. Given the small number of villagers employed in local businesses, it seems clear that the larger number now working from home provide a greater input to the local economy and the potential for future growth. Forty-one people answered our poll on the village website to say that they work from home. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore sets out to support householder applications to extend existing homes or build new structures within residential curtilages to enable more home working. Many such proposals will not require planning permission, but some will, and the policy highlights the importance attached to home working and the related benefits for the parish.

**POLICY SEM 3: Communications Infrastructure**

- 1. Where planning permission is required, development proposals to improve the mobile phone coverage and internet connections in the plan area shall be supported.**
- 2. All new dwellings and business premises in the parish should be enabled to ensure a superfast broadband connection can be installed on an open access basis, and designed to enable future repair or upgrading.**
- 3. Proposals for new or improved mobile phone infrastructure should be permitted, providing that the proposals do not significantly adversely affect the surrounding built or natural environment (including the setting of heritage assets and key views).**

6.12. Poor wifi and mobile phone communications have long been a cause of complaint in Semington. Research<sup>23</sup> for this Plan indicates that three-quarters of the businesses rate their broadband as good or adequate, with only a quarter describing it as poor or dreadful. Seven say that their business needs full fibre broadband, with one of them considering Elon Musk’s Starlink system as an alternative. Most of the others rate it as “nice to have” rather than essential.

6.13. Mobile coverage is more of an issue. Just over half of businesses rate their signal as poor or awful.

6.14. Poor communications infrastructure must not limit the opportunity for business development in the parish. Access to high quality Broadband and mobile phone/data services are also an essential part of life more generally, vital for a range of everyday needs as well education. The rural nature of the parish means that the availability of these services is variable. The policy ensures that new developments enable this necessary feature of 21<sup>st</sup> century life.

---

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.semington.org.uk/Documents/Neighbourhood\\_Plan/Reports/SEMINGTON-NP-BUSINESS-SURVEY.pdf](https://www.semington.org.uk/Documents/Neighbourhood_Plan/Reports/SEMINGTON-NP-BUSINESS-SURVEY.pdf)

## Environment and Wellbeing Policies

6.15. The policies in this section help meet the following objectives:

1. To maintain the parish's wildlife-rich open countryside and support farming and other businesses that determine and protect the unique setting, character and identity of Semington.
4. To celebrate and protect the Kennet & Avon Canal and Semington Brook, and the parish's significant landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, green space and cultural and heritage artifacts.
5. To retain and enhance the rights of way network and local green spaces in the parish that are of significant community value.

### **POLICY SEM 4: Local Green Space Designation**

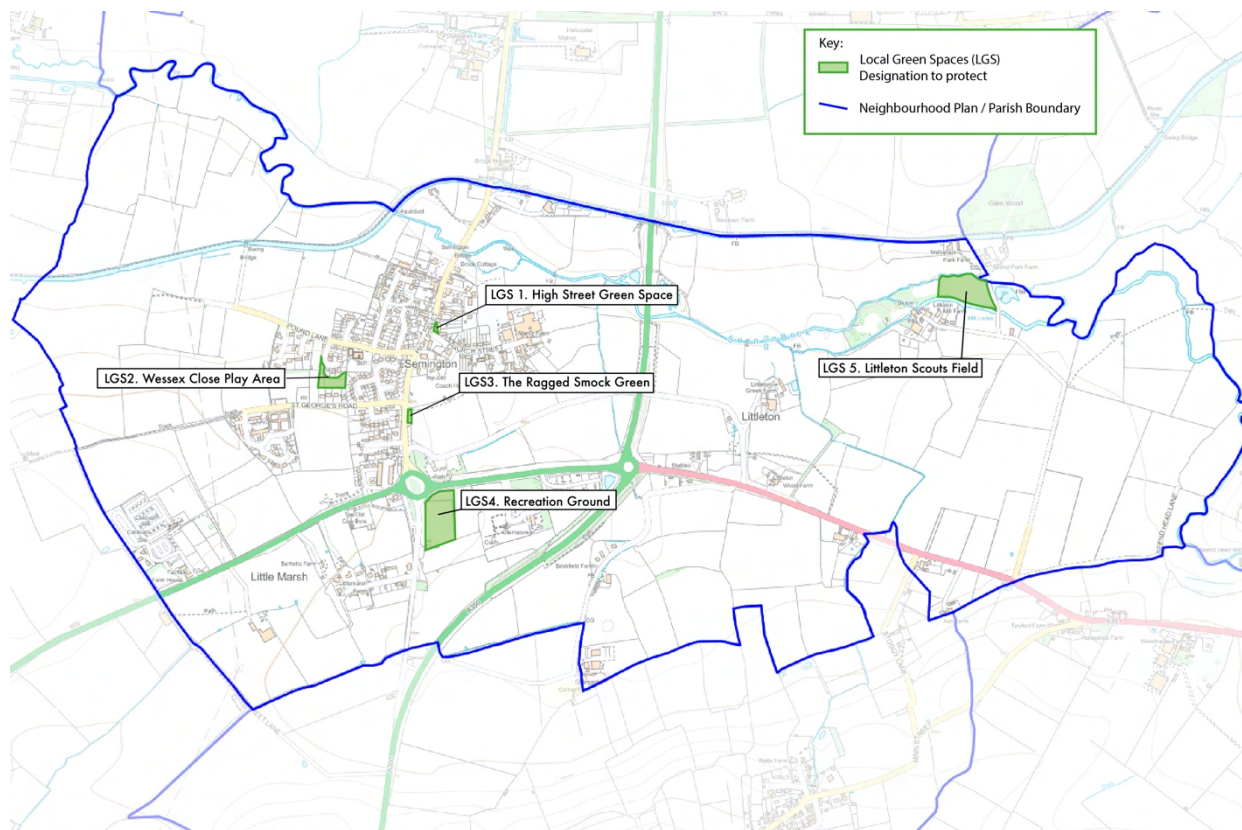
**The following areas are designated Local Green Spaces, as shown on Map 6**

- **LGS 1 High Street Green Space**
- **LGS 2. Wessex Close Play Area**
- **LGS 3. Ragged Smock**
- **LGS 4. Recreation Ground**
- **LGS 5. Littleton Scouts Field**

**Policies for managing development within these areas should be consistent with those for Green Belts, including development that would positively enhance the beneficial use of these spaces, provided their openness is preserved.**

6.16. The policy proposes to designate five important green spaces in the parish as Local Green Spaces. The policy has the effect of managing development proposals in line with the Green Belt, which prevent any development unless the 'very special circumstances' test can be met. The locations of the five Local Green Spaces are shown below on Map 6.

Map 6: Local Green Spaces



6.17. The full justification of how each space is considered to meet the criteria that are set out in the NPPF<sup>24</sup> is detailed in the supporting evidence report (Semington Local Green Spaces Report 2023) which also includes individual maps of each space.

6.18. Semington has few green spaces for the villagers to gather. The High Street Green Space importantly provides the only outdoors space in the village for local celebrations – which together with a bench and information board make it a focal point. The Ragged Smock is another area which has an information board and bench and is an important green space in terms of our local history. Other spaces identified for Local Green Space designation provide spaces for recreation for all ages.

<sup>24</sup> National Planning Policy Framework December 2023. Paragraphs 105 and 106

**POLICY SEM 5: Public Rights of Way and Cycle Network**

- 1. Development proposals on land that lies within or adjacent to the Public Rights of Way and Cycle Network as shown on Map 7, should sustain, and where possible, enhance the multifunctionality of the Networks, for example through layout, access and landscape treatment.**
- 2. All proposals will be expected to integrate routeways for walking and cycling connections into the wider village and parish network where it is feasible and practicable to do so.**
- 3. Development proposals should make an appropriate contribution to the improvement and/or extension of the network where it is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, where it is directly related to the development and where the contribution is fairly related in scale and kind to the development.**

6.19. The parish benefits from an extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes. These are an important wildlife habitat, are key to the village's biodiversity, and connect the village to the surrounding countryside and to nearby settlements. This network of routes has been identified by people locally as being highly valued for their beauty, tranquility and recreation – the contribution to physical and mental health was especially appreciated during the pandemic.

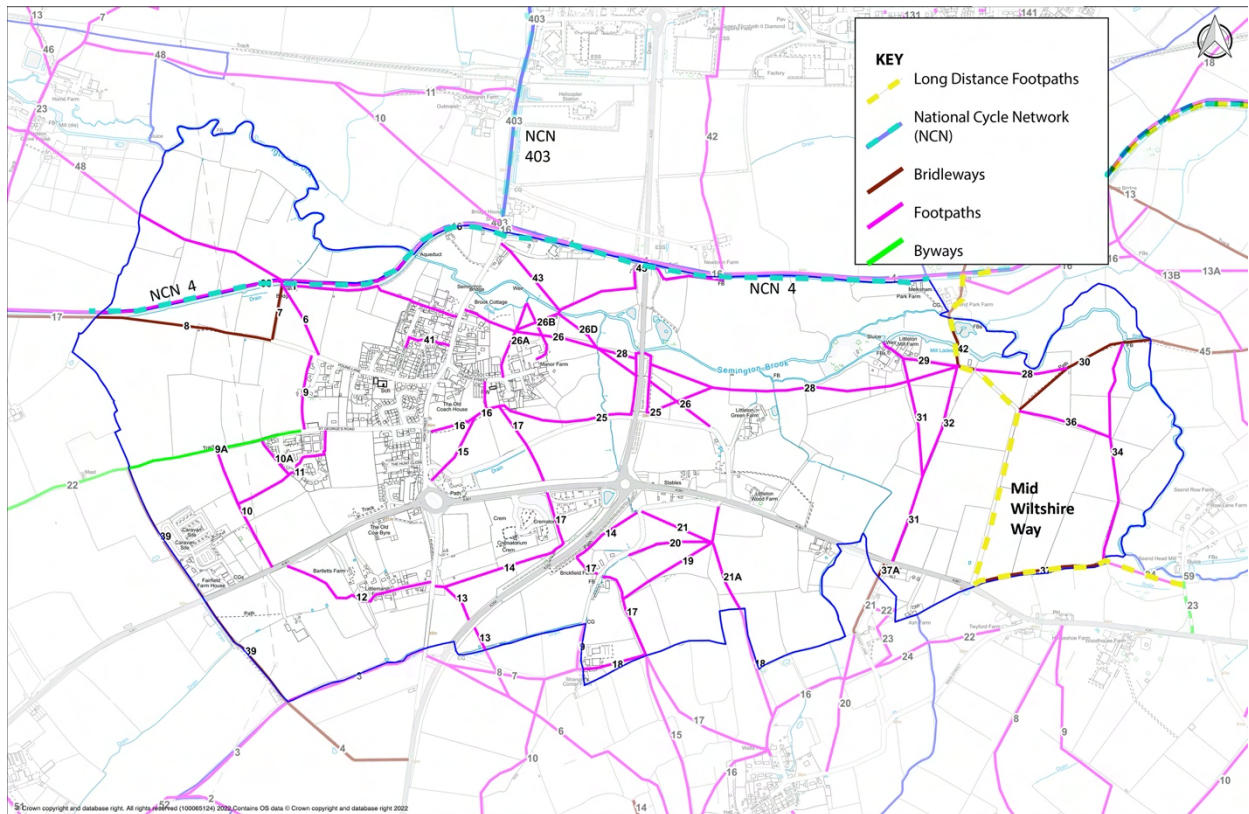
6.20. Nationally recognised and promoted tourist routes within the parish are:

- The Kennet & Avon Canal and towpath – attracts boat users (tourist and residential) and users of the towpath.
- The Mid Wiltshire Way Long Distance Path – crosses the parish at its eastern end.
- National Cycle Route 403 meets National Cycle Route 4 at the Kennet & Avon Canal on the parish boundary.

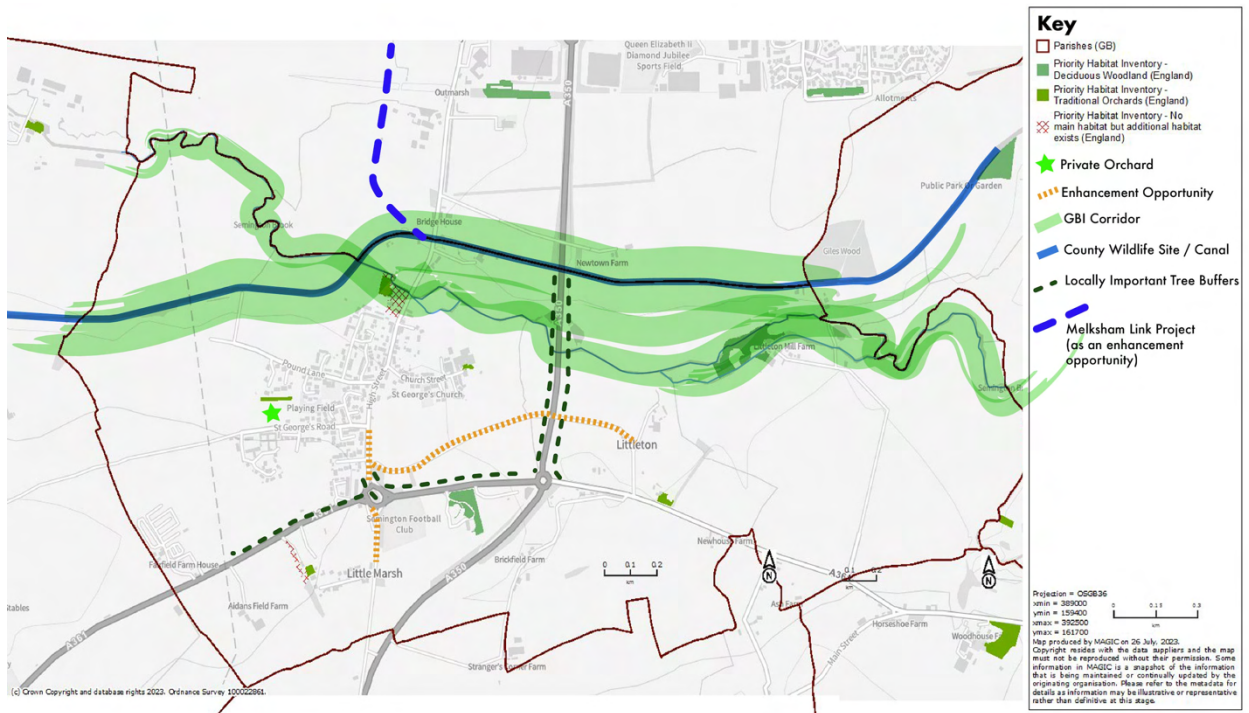
6.21. The footpath SEMI 28 is noted as an especially appreciated local route offering a circular route when combined with other footpaths. From Semington village, this right of way largely follows the route of Semington Brook on its south bank, it incorporates the historic mill at Littleton, and connects with the Mid Wilts Way Long-Distance Route, with an option to return to Semington via the Kennet & Avon Canal. Similarly, SEMI 9 linking with SEMI 8 is a well-used circular route for horse riders.

6.22. The footpaths and bridleways are an essential part of the infrastructure of the parish, used principally for leisure, health and well-being purposes, but also providing important connections to a range of facilities and the neighbouring towns. Ensuring this network is protected, expanded and linked into where possible is important and therefore captured in this policy.

Map 7: Public Rights of Way and Cycle Network



Map 8: Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI)



**POLICY SEM 6: Green and Blue Infrastructure and Nature Recovery**

- 1. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Network for the purpose of promoting nature protection and recovery as well as the necessary mitigation of climate change. The Network encompasses significant assets including Semington Brook and associated floodplain, the corridor of the Kennet & Avon Canal as shown on Map 8 together with the strong network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.**
- 2. Development proposals must maintain and improve the GBI of the parish in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes, linking into and extending the Network where possible. This includes the retention of existing trees and hedgerows as an integral part of development proposals. This includes appropriate measures to secure their protection during any construction works. Appropriate development proposals will be given positive weight in favour of granting planning approval where it is demonstrated that the Network will be extended through realising the Enhancement Opportunity at Map 8: the delivery of new or extended woodland that retains water and sequesters carbon and tree cover to reduce overheating is secured.**
- 3. Proposals that will lead to the loss of land lying within the Network and that will undermine its integrity or functionality will be resisted, unless suitable alternative provision can be provided.**

6.23. The community of Semington places great value on the wide variety of green and blue places that bring benefits to people and wildlife. From the canal to the Semington Brook and the hedges and trees that line the fields that are multiple benefits that these places and spaces bring us.

6.24. As set out in the Wiltshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022), green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies.

6.25. The natural environment faces urgent and significant challenges, in the UK as a whole there has been a 13% decline in the average abundance of wildlife since the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> The Environment Act 2021 introduced a number of measures with the aim of tackling the decline and supporting nature recovery.

6.26. By defining a network of key green infrastructure assets in the Neighbourhood Plan area we can add local detail to national and regional environmental ambitions for the community and wildlife by promoting habitat creation and, importantly, linkage between habitats.

---

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/news/state-of-nature-report>

**POLICY SEM 7: Protecting Semington's Rural Landscape**

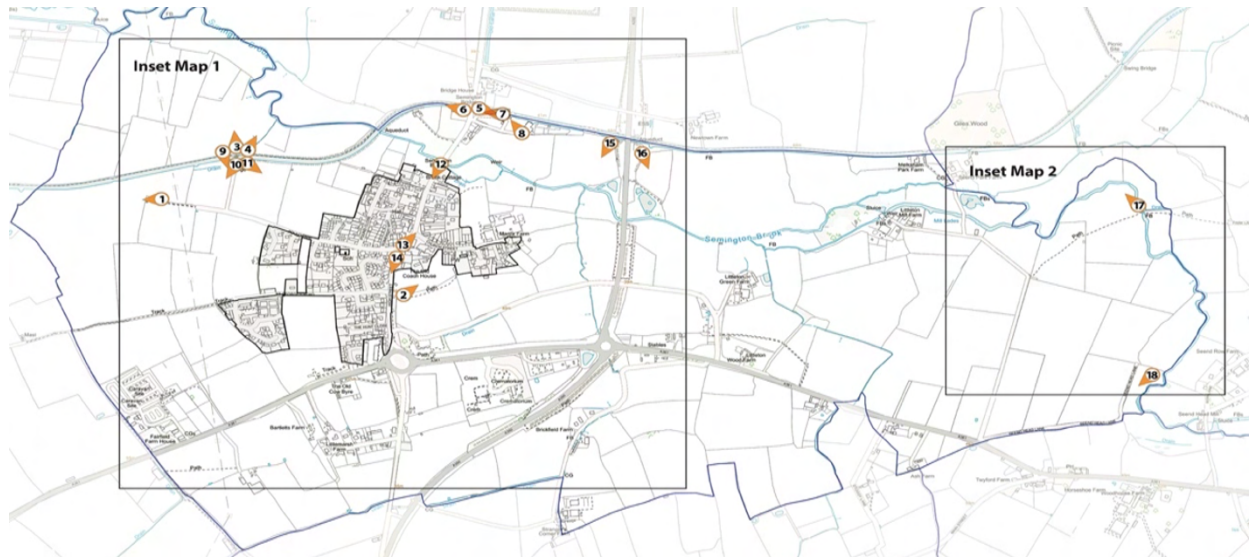
- 1. Development proposals outside the Semington built-up area that accord with local and national policies for development in the countryside, will be supported where proposals singularly and cumulatively, maintain the rural landscape and a sensitive settlement edge. New development will, where appropriate, be expected to:**
  - a. respect and respond to the landscape character sensitivities of the area as identified in the Semington Landscape and Visual Appraisal; and,**
  - b. maintain and enhance the overall green and blue infrastructure network; and,**
  - c. maintain the rural setting of smaller settlements and of farmsteads outside Semington village.**
  
- 2. The Neighbourhood Plan shows an area of high landscape sensitivity, as shown on Map 10. Development in this area will only be supported where it:**
  - a. maintains the rural landscape, the generally open character of the countryside and a sensitive settlement edge;**
  - b. minimises urbanising effects, artificial lighting and traffic movements;**
  - c. retains important elements of the green and blue infrastructure network and the rural landscape such as the Kennet & Avon Canal, hedgerows and trees and views;**
  - d. does not adversely impact the existing landscape and recreational value of the countryside;**
  
- 3. The nationally promoted and recognised route of the Kennet & Avon Canal, and its setting, is a key feature in this area of high landscape sensitivity and must be protected. Development proposals which include new buildings, structures and land uses that would undermine the rural, undeveloped nature of the setting to the Canal will not be permitted.**
  
- 4. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies 18 key views on Map 9. Proposals for development should take into account the key views, and should not cause undue harm to the natural or historic landscape features that contribute to their acknowledged value.**

6.27. Natural England published an updated profile for the area in 2014. The Parish is located in National Character Area Profile 117: Avon Vales.<sup>26</sup> Whilst the National Character Area profiles provide some insight into the landscape around the Study Area, they cover large areas and only provide a broad overview.

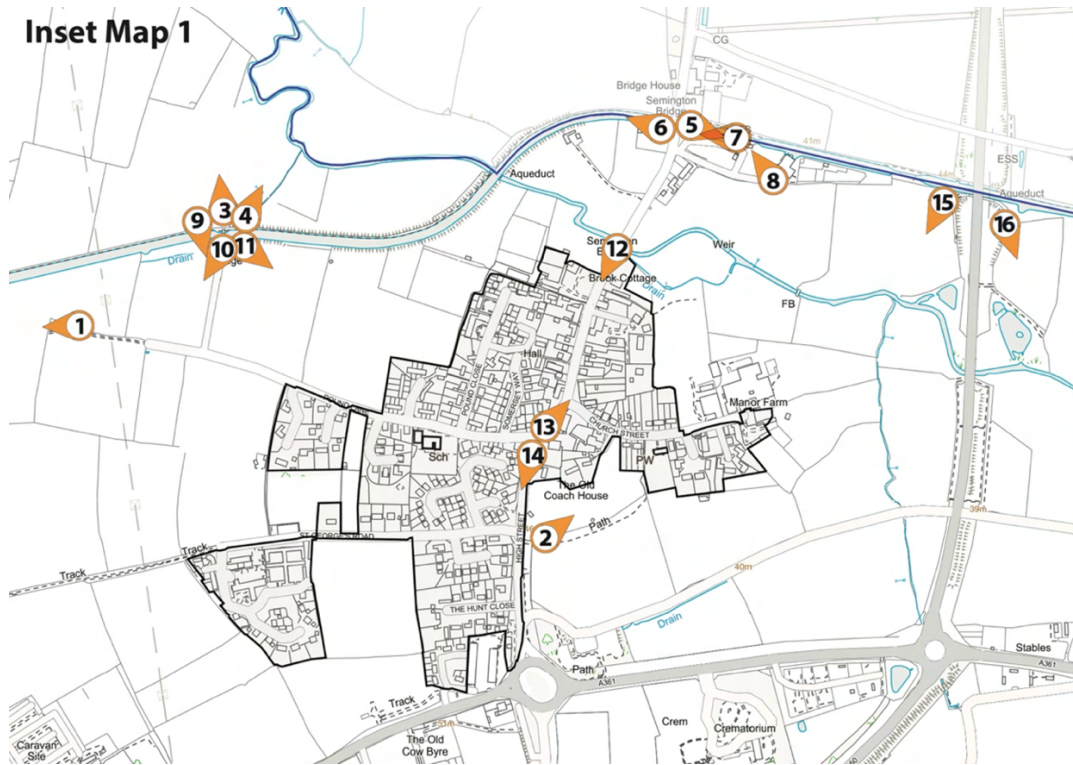
---

<sup>26</sup> <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4822288767647744>

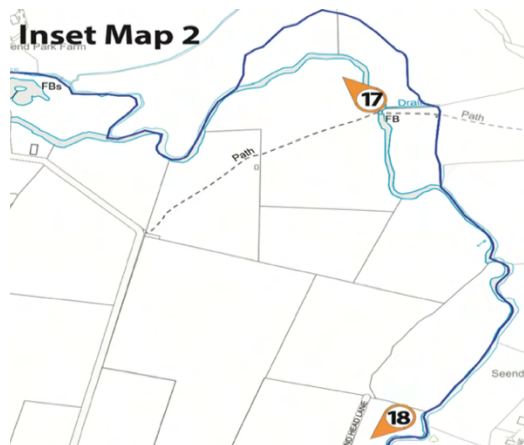
Map 9 Locally Valued Key Views



**Inset Map 1**

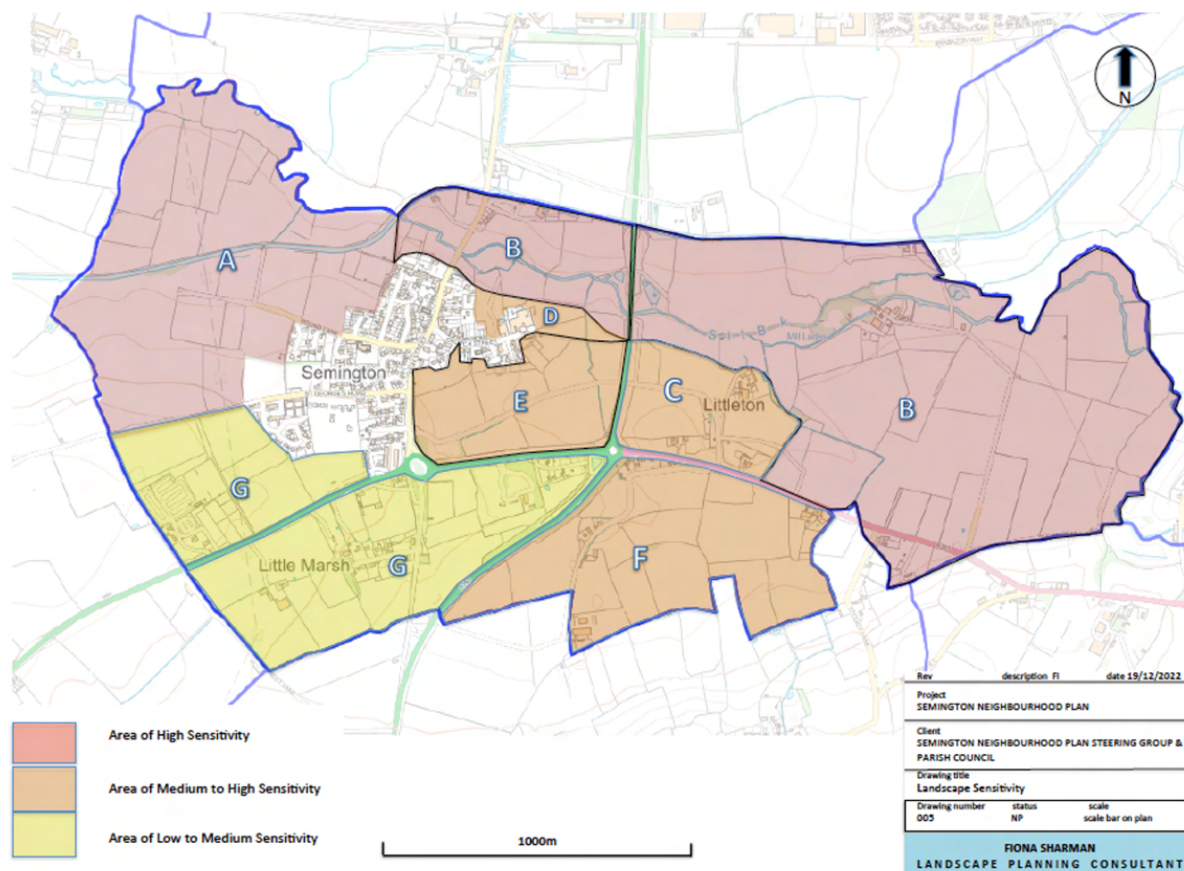


**Inset Map 2**



For precise locations and directions, please see the Key Views report on the Semington Parish Council website.

Map 10: Landscape Sensitivity



6.28. The Semington Landscape and Visual Appraisal identifies the combination of elements and features (characteristics) of the parish landscape, analysing the Landscape and Visual baseline of the parish and its levels of landscape and visual sensitivity. From this study, it is evident that there are areas and elements within the parish that by virtue of their sensitivity, value and function would warrant safeguarding/protection and/or enhancement.

6.29. These are primarily:

- The setting to the settlement of Semington
- The corridor of the Kennet & Avon Canal and its setting (also forming part of the parish boundary)
- The course of Semington Brook and associated floodplain
- Key views
- Other existing Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) assets such as hedgerows.

6.30. The areas of high landscape sensitivity shown on Map 10 provide a distinctive rural edge character to the settlement and a strong sense of separation between the settlement boundary and parish boundary with the Melksham Area beyond. It is strategically important to retain the fields either side of the High Street both:

- to maintain the separation of the settlement of Semington from the parish boundary with Melksham Area; and,
- to protect the landscape setting of Semington Brook, the route of the Kennet & Avon Canal and Semington village.

It should be noted here that the adjoining parish of Melksham Without is updating its Neighbourhood Plan (a joint Plan with Melksham) to include a policy on green buffers, one of which serves to maintain the separation between Semington and Bowerhill.

6.31. Light pollution has been mentioned as a point of concern by some in the local community. The Parish encourages developers to include measures to minimise adverse impact on tranquillity and dark skies. Lighting measures proposed should align with guidance provided by the International Dark Skies Association.<sup>27</sup>

6.32. The Key Views Report provides a photographic record of viewpoint (VP) locations that:

- demonstrate specific key and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape.
- are representative views, e.g. they represent the overall visual experience of people using a particular route.
- are illustrative of and demonstrate visual character/qualities/uniqueness that are of value to the community.
- demonstrate the value of Semington village and its countryside setting plus the value of the wider parish context and its setting.

6.33. There are many places in the Semington parish area where beautiful views can be enjoyed. This is the case whether we look outward from Semington village or Little Marsh into the parish, within the parish itself, or into the parish from neighbouring areas where there are views of our settlements and significant landmarks. The neighbourhood planning process allows such key views to be recorded and given extra significance and protection through a planning policy. More detail about the process of identifying the views shown on the map and the detail about the views can be found in the Semington Key Views Report which records those views and the evidence for them



*Above: Looking from the High Street towards Roundway Down above Devizes – one of our key views*

<sup>27</sup> <https://darksky.org/resources/guides-and-how-tos/lighting-principles/>

## Housing and Development Policies

6.34. The policies in this section help meet the following objectives:

2. To provide the housing the community wants and needs in developments of appropriate size in the locations it approves and in a range of housing tenures and types, to meet the needs of young people, growing families and older residents.
3. To ensure any development is low carbon, built to a high quality and a locally distinctive design, to maintain the essential character of the settlements.
4. To celebrate and protect the Kennet & Avon Canal and Semington Brook, and the parish's significant landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, green space and cultural and heritage artifacts.
5. To retain and enhance the rights of way network and local green spaces in the parish that are of significant community value
6. To protect and improve the recreational, sporting, social, educational and service facilities in the parish for all ages.
7. To sustain and encourage a broad range of community facilities and business

### **POLICY SEM 8: Design and Local Distinctiveness**

- 1. As well as proposals for development demonstrating regard to national design guides and requirements in the Wiltshire Design Guide, applicants should also demonstrate that their proposal reflects the character and local distinctiveness of Semington and that they have properly understood and responded to the recorded key design characteristics / heritage and development cues of the relevant character area in the design of their proposals as set out in the Semington Parish Character Statement. This includes designated and locally valued non-designated heritage assets.**
- 2. Development proposals for 10 dwellings or more are also encouraged to use the 'Building for a Healthy Life 12' design assessment tool (or equivalent methodology). As a guide, development should seek to achieve a score of no 'reds', design out all 'ambers' and achieve a majority of 'greens'. A 'Building for a Healthy Life' Assessment is encouraged to be included within the Design and Access Statement and ideally should be submitted as part of application documents.**

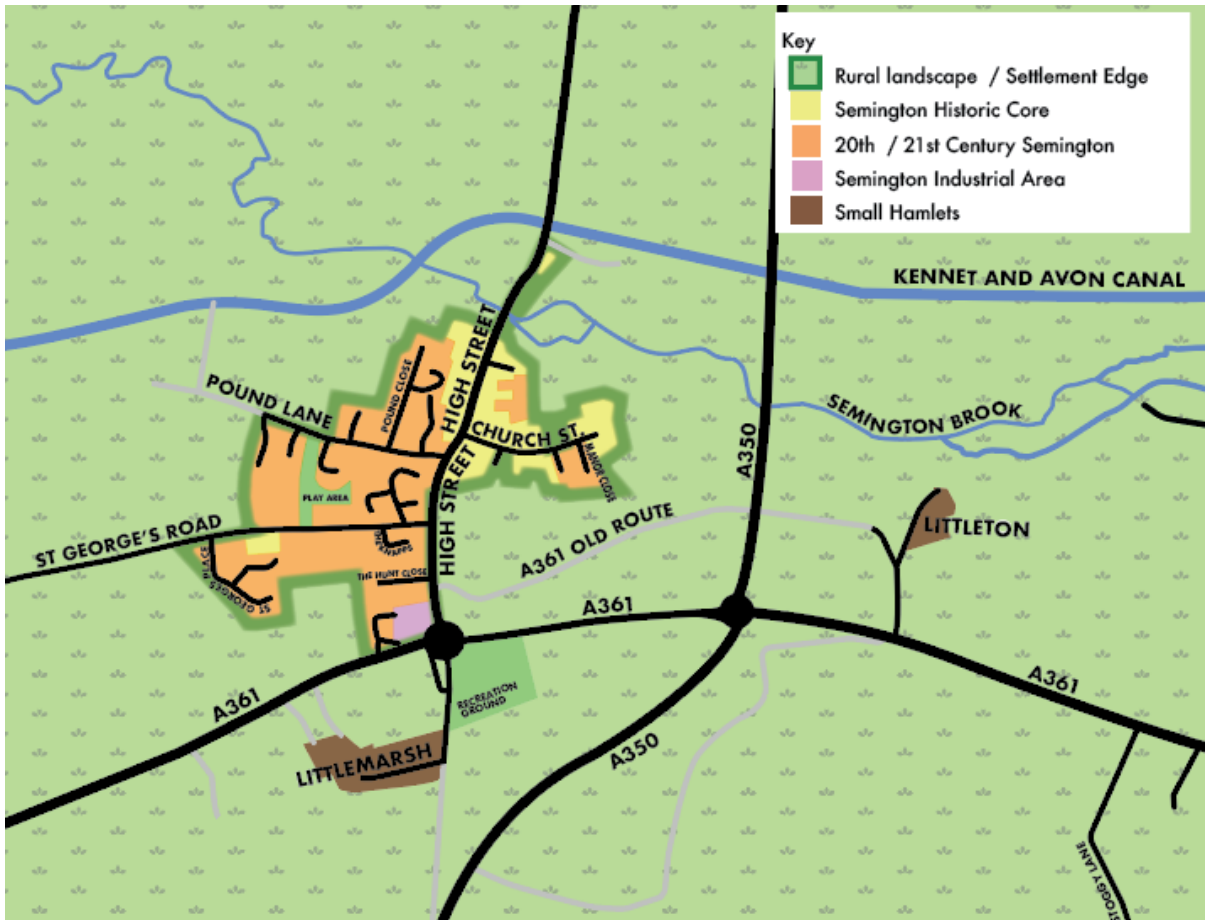
6.35. Policy SEM 8 establishes the importance of high-quality design that reflects the locally distinctive character of the parish. It requires applicants to acknowledge, understand and respond to the Semington Parish Character Statement (2023) prepared as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Character Statement describes the local character and distinctiveness of the parish valued by the local community and is included in alongside this Plan. Map 11 on page 35 illustrates different character areas identified through analysis of the character of the village.

- 6.36. The area's heritage is reflected in buildings and the layout of the village, and our routeways which together make up our local historic environment. Our heritage is a key part of the character of the village, therefore designated heritage assets (all Grade II in Semington) and heritage assets that have local value (non-designated) which play an important part in the local character are shown on Map 12 on page 35. The Neighbourhood Plan gives an opportunity to strengthen the influence of locally valued, non-designated heritage as a material consideration in the planning process.
- 6.37. The quality of design in general is a key issue not just for our community but also now at national level. The NPPF also underscores the importance of high-quality design: "the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve." (NPPF, Paragraph 131).
- 6.38. The NPPF also sets out that: "Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development" (NPPF, Paragraph 132).
- 6.39. National guidance will also need to be taken into account in any development proposals, this includes the National Design Guide and Building for a Healthy Life. Building for a Healthy Life is a design tool which structures design approach on a range of issues and is most effective when used early in the design process; the 12 considerations of the assessment are an effective way of structuring pre-application discussions on design quality. Wiltshire Council also have a Design Guide<sup>28</sup> (March 2024) for the county which sets out detailed and measurable criteria for achieving good design in Wiltshire.

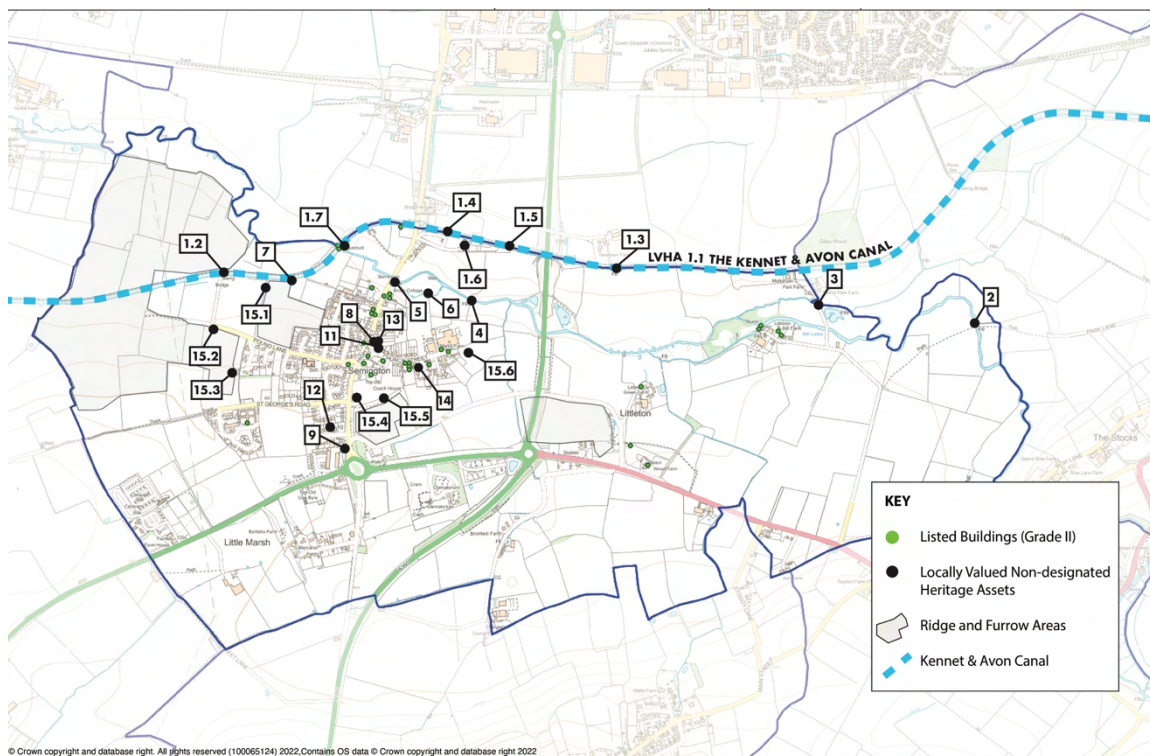
---

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/6110/Wiltshire-Design-Guide>

Map 11: Character Areas in Semington



Map 12: Designated Heritage Assets and Locally Valued, Non-designated Heritage Assets



**Mapped Locally Valued Non-designated Heritage Assets (adding more detail to Map 12)**

**Kennet & Avon Canal**

- 1.1 Kennet & Avon Canal
- 1.2 Kennet & Avon Swing Bridge 161 north of Pound Lane
- 1.3 Kennet & Avon Swing Bridge 159 just east of the A350
- 1.4 Kennet & Avon Semington Lock 15
- 1.5 Kennet & Avon Harris Lock 16
- 1.6 Semington Lock House and Dock
- 1.7 Structural bank of the canal supporting the Aqueduct 5



Above: No.1 The Kennet & Avon Canal

**Bridges (non canal)**

- 2. Bridge over Semington Brook at the eastern parish boundary
- 3. Bridge over Semington Brook by Seend Park Farm
- 4. Iron Bridge across Semington Brook near Manor Farm
- 5. Bridge over Semington Brook at the High Street
- 6. Redundant bridge and brickwork on the dry channel in the field south of Semington Brook and east of the High St



Above: No. 13 Whitewashed Terrace

**Misc.**

- 7. Stone Stile along PRow SEMI 1
- 8. Phone Box
- 9. Toll House
- 10. Ridge and Furrow Fields
- 11. Old Wesleyan chapel on the High Street
- 12. The Old Kennels
- 13. Terrace of rendered whitewashed homes at the triangle green opposite the village hall
- 14. Old church school to the east of the church



Above: No. 11 The Old Wesleyan Chapel

**WW II Heritage Sites**

- 15.1 Infantry Pill Box
- 15.2 Vertical Rail Obstacle
- 15.3 Anti-tank Pill Box
- 15.4 Anti-tank Pill Box
- 15.5 Infantry Pill Box
- 15.6 Anti-tank Pill Box

**POLICY SEM 9: Pre-application Community Engagement**

- 1. In line with National Planning Policy, applications are encouraged to demonstrate proportionate, proactive and effective engagement with the community at the pre-submission stage. Particularly with regard to design issues drawing on the Semington Parish Character Statement.**
- 2 Where a Design and Access Statement is required as part of a planning application, applicants are encouraged to describe how the local community has been engaged in the process of preparing an application, and how input from the community has shaped the design of proposals where possible. Potential applicants are therefore encouraged to follow the procedure set out in the Semington Parish Community Pre-Application Engagement Protocol (see appendix 1) and the Wiltshire Council Statement of Community Involvement (2020 and any subsequent updates).**
- 3 Pre-application community engagement is also encouraged for Reserved Matters Applications as well as Outline or Full.**

6.40. National Planning guidance and policy stresses the considerable value of pre-application involvement: *"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."* (NPPF, paragraph 39).

6.41. Semington Parish Council recognises that establishing early, open and mutual discussions with potential applicants is key to maximising the benefits of development. The Parish Council therefore adopted a 'Community Pre-Application Engagement Protocol' in 2023, which potential applicants can access and should use when preparing development proposals in the parish. This is included in appendix 1 on page 47.

6.42. When introduced at an early stage, community involvement can change the form and nature of a development for the better – it affects land use. Putting in place a coherent and consistent approach in the form of a Protocol for the Parish is a key way to deliver this mutual benefit. It should be noted here, the use of the Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Semington Parish Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good engagement process is agreed and followed.

6.43. The National Design Guide also highlights the vital role that communities play in the design process. The intention of this policy is therefore to lead to a higher standard of local community engagement in the design process, and this policy draws directly on the National Planning Policy Framework wording and addresses how a planning application should be considered. *"Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot."* (NPPF, paragraph 137).

**POLICY SEM 10: Land to the west of Turnpike Close (the Auction Field)**

- 1. Land to the west of Turnpike Close, (known locally as the Auction Field) as defined on Map 13, is allocated for the development of approximately 40 dwellings and a village shop (use class F2(a)).**
- 2. The housing proposal should:**
  - a. Meet local needs, as identified in the Semington Parish Housing Needs Survey (2021), the Swindon and Wiltshire SHMA 2017, and any subsequent updates, this should include at least 30% affordable homes (or higher in line with the Wiltshire Development Plan);**
  - b. Include a site-specific flood risk assessment. All proposed development will need to pass the sequential test from all sources of flooding. When preparing flood risk assessments, local flood risk sources must be considered, not only information available from the Environment Agency,**
  - c. Meet the requirements of the Semington Character Statement in terms of the design, layout, form, heights and materials. The development should reflect the existing low-medium density character of the wider area; and,**
  - d. Not be occupied until the village shop is constructed and capable of occupation for its intended use (secured by planning condition).**
- 3. The development proposal will be expected to be informed by robust and meaningful community engagement, in accordance with the Semington Pre-Application Engagement Protocol. The overall development of the site should be informed by the site design principles and concept masterplanning framework set out in the Semington Design Codes and Masterplanning Report and illustrated on Map 14, should include the following key features (secured by planning condition where appropriate):**
  - a. High quality open space, including recreation areas;**
  - b. Retention of trees and hedgerows with the provision of new areas of landscaping to provide an appropriate buffer from the A361 and existing development;**
  - c. Pedestrian and cycle linkages through the site particularly linking into the existing Public Right of Way network and to facilitate access to key facilities in the village (including the new village shop) via the east and northern site boundaries; and,**
  - d. Safe access, including vehicular access, which should not be directly from the A361 (which is part of the national primary road network where there is a presumption against new development being served directly off it in the case of land outside built up areas), and the provision of sufficient car and cycle parking which is appropriately sited within the development.**
  - e. The site lies within the height and bird strike safeguarding zone of RAF Keevil and the development should not impact on the operation and capability of that military airfield.**
- 4. In line with Policy SEM12, a Sustainable Energy Statement should be submitted to demonstrate measures to adapt to climate change impacts.**

Map 13 – Site Features and Constraints (Source: Design Codes and Masterplan Report Aecom 2024)



6.44. The 2002 book, *Semington Past and Present*, which is a history of Semington, makes many references to a shop in the village. It's clear from this that the location of the shop changed from time to time and was usually part of an existing structure.

6.45. At one point there were two shops, one run by Elsie Gaisford and one by Granny Hancock. A post office became part of a village shop from late Victorian times. In 1959 a purpose-built shop was built on land adjacent to the village hall. In 2002, welcoming the coming of a much-anticipated by-pass, a villager is quoted in the Firmager book:

*"I hear there is at last going to be a by-pass for Semington, soon to be built. This will be a blessing for the village. I only hope it doesn't mean that the shop, like so many in our villages, will close due to the lack of custom. Time will tell."*

6.46. Time did tell, and the shop closed shortly after the by-pass was opened in 2004. The building was subsequently demolished and a house built on the site.

6.47. This closure of the shop and post office was regretted almost immediately and there have been persistent calls from villagers since then for a replacement. A number of subsequent planning applications mooted including a shop but none of these came to anything for reasons that had nothing to do with the possible shop.

6.48. In neighbourhood development planning consultations since 2022, the idea of a shop always crops up. For example, in the report of the drop-in event on March 5th 2022,

villagers commented on the need for more (and better) village facilities, the better use of facilities and meeting the needs of all. The facilities mentioned included a shop. Two comments were:

*"More activities at the village hall and a village shop would be an advantage to old and disabled people rather than the post office twice a week in the hall. I would certainly use it."*

*"I'd like to see more socially-centred places. A village shop to encourage walking and social interaction."*

- 6.49. This policy proposes to restrict the shop to 'Use Class F2 – Local Community (a) – Shops' (described as 'selling essential goods, including food, where the shop's premises do not exceed 280 square metres and there is no other such facility within 1000 metres') – this is with aim of ensuring that any change of use away from a shop will require planning permission and cannot be done through permitted development rights.
- 6.50. Though the village has seen significant levels of development over recent years, it was understood that the Neighbourhood Plan presented an opportunity for the community of the parish to play a more proactive role in where and what future development would look like.
- 6.51. A local 'call for sites' was held by the parish in quarter 2 of 2022 which enabled an independent assessment of available sites to determine if any were potentially suitable for allocation by independent consultants Aecom.<sup>29</sup> The process of site assessment and selection was then continued in the form of informal consultation with the village in April 2023. The outcomes of this indicated support for allocation (and is detailed in the Consultation Statement), and clear preference for one site (Site 1, west of Semington Turnpike and north of the A361) over the other three available and potentially suitable sites. This site was also assessed more favourably than all other sites assessed in the Aecom Site Options and Assessment Report. This site is therefore included in this Plan as an allocation in this Plan with support from the community demonstrated through consultation feedback, including that from the pre-submission 'Regulation 14' consultation in February and March 2024, with nearly 80% of community respondents supporting the allocation. The landowner has been engaged as part of the plan making process and has shared helping 'vision' documents for the site and has confirmed that the site is available and deliverable. An independent scoping opinion on viability<sup>30</sup> has also been produced for the Neighbourhood Plan, demonstrating the site is viable. An overview of the allocation process, and all the information that supports it, is available as part of the evidence base that supports the Plan. This can be found on the Parish Council website, on the Neighbourhood Plan pages.
- 6.52. The most recently produced document underpinning this allocation is a Design Codes and Masterplanning Report produced by independent consultants, Aecom.<sup>31</sup> Together all the consultation and evidence base documents underpin our local community

---

<sup>29</sup> Site Options and Assessment Report, Aecom. February 2022

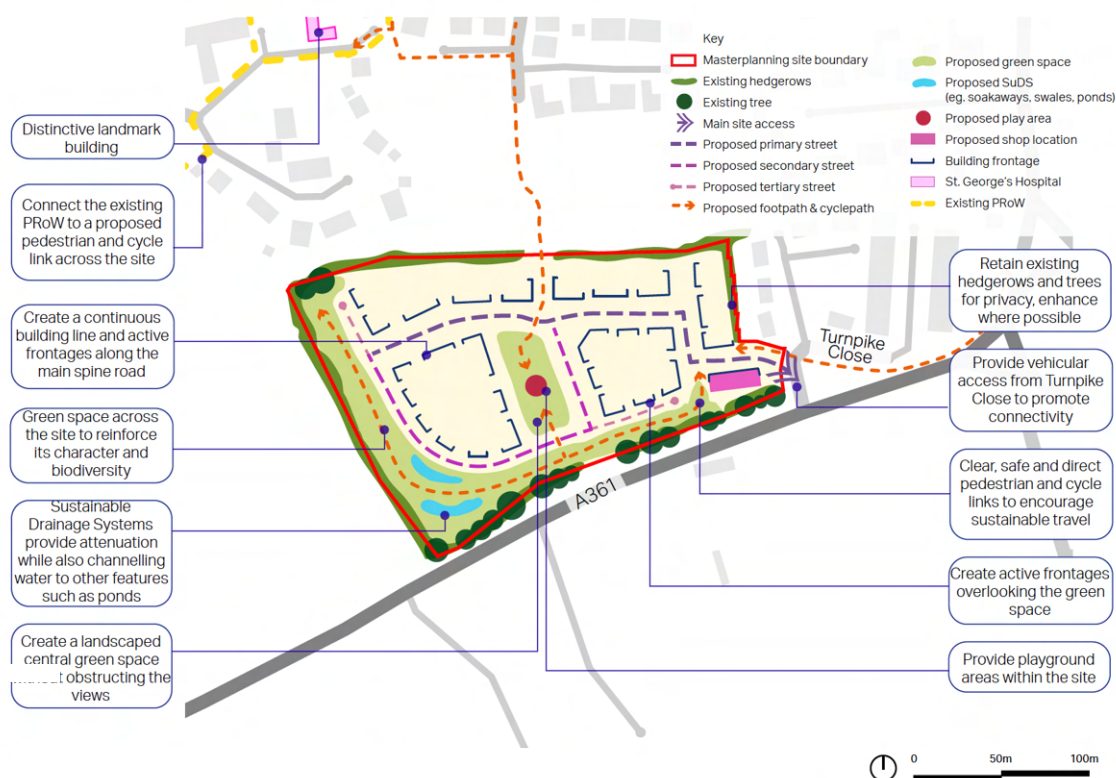
<sup>30</sup> Scoping Opinion on Viability. Sem10: Land to the West of Turnpike Close (the Auction Field). Bailey Venning Associates on behalf of Semington Parish Council. March 2024

<sup>31</sup> Design Codes and Masterplan Report, Aecom. June 2024

ambition to deliver a new village shop, and well-designed homes in a location supported by our community, that bring benefits to our village and contributes to sustainable development.

6.53. The Design Concepts produced by the landowner, and the Design Concept Framework as shown below (Map 14) illustrate how the site could be sustainably delivered and should be used to inform the preparation of the planning application for the development of the site.

*Map 14 – Concept Masterplanning Framework (Source – Design Codes and Masterplan Report Aecom 2024)*



6.54. The policy includes the acronym SHMA. This refers to the Swindon and Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.<sup>32</sup> The primary objective of the SHMA is to identify the forthcoming housing requirements including types, sizes and tenures.

6.55. Housing development proposals will need to comply with Habitats Regulations through adherence to the TBMS (2020, or any subsequent iterations). A project level Habitats Regulations Assessment is required with regards to potential impacts on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). See Policy SEM 1.

<sup>32</sup> [wiltshire.gov.uk/media/688/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-2017/pdf/spp-shma-2017-final.pdf?m=637103721480900000](https://wiltshire.gov.uk/media/688/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-2017/pdf/spp-shma-2017-final.pdf?m=637103721480900000)

## Community Facilities Policies

6.56. The policies in this section help meet the following objectives:

6. To protect and improve the recreational, sporting, social, educational, and service facilities within the parish for all ages.
7. To sustain and encourage a broad range of community facilities and business.

### **POLICY SEM 11: Community Facilities**

- 1. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following buildings as community facilities:**
  - a. Semington Village Hall (as a location for a number of important community services and group meetings);**
  - b. St George's Church;**
  - c. St George's C of E Primary School;**
  - d. Somerset Arms Public House.**
- 2. Proposals that will harm or result in the loss of a local community facility as defined above, will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the site/building is no longer required or no longer economically viable for an equivalent or alternative community use, or where an equivalent facility is available.**
- 3. Development proposals for new, replacement, extended and/or improved community facilities and open space will be supported, including:**
  - a. a village shop;**
  - b. facilities for children and young people;**
  - c. enhancements to the Village Hall, including EV charging facilities in the car park;**
  - d. allotments.**

6.57. Semington is a small village with limited community facilities and amenities, although what we do have make a significant contribution to the wellbeing and community spirit of the village. This was vital during the recent pandemic, and the village has been invigorated by the sense of Community during difficult times. The Somerset Arms is at the time of writing this, closed, but we are hopeful that this highly valued local facility will reopen.

6.58. The village lost its small village shop in the early 2000s when the by-pass took through traffic away from the village. There has been talk over the years of a 'community shop', but this has never materialised for a variety of reasons. Over the years, the community has raised the need for allotments with the Parish Council, and this was finally achieved in 2024.

6.59. Not only is it seen by local people to be extremely important to retain the facilities that we currently have, but the likely addition of new housing and hence a growth in population suggests a possible need to improve or add to these facilities in future.

## Sustainability and Climate Change Policies

6.60. The policies in this section help meet the following objectives:

3. To ensure any development is built to take account of climate change, is high quality and a locally distinctive design, to maintain the essential character of the settlements.
4. To celebrate and protect the Kennet & Avon Canal and Semington Brook, and the parish's significant landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, green space and cultural and heritage artifacts.

### **POLICY SEM 12: Sustainable Construction**

- 1. Development should be designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their operation through the Energy Hierarchy. Firstly, development should seek to reduce energy demand through passive measures such as orientation and fenestration arrangements. Then low-carbon, electrified solutions for space and water heating are encouraged that are highly efficient such as heat-pumps. Finally, renewable technologies such as roof mounted solar PV is supported to help meet regulated and unregulated energy demand. Through this approach developers should aspire to net zero carbon in operation (as defined by industry best practice).**
- 2. Development proposals are encouraged to consider the impact of embodied carbon from the demolition and construction processes. Where appropriate, the re-use and re-purposing of existing buildings is supported and encouraged, particularly buildings of a traditional rural nature. In all development, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate consideration of how the substructure, superstructure and external materials have been designed so as to target low-carbon solutions. Benchmarking proposals against respected industry standards such as the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge is encouraged.**
- 3. To reflect our changing climate, developments are encouraged to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change impacts such as overheating, flood risk and water scarcity. Nature-based solutions are particularly encouraged as these offer co-benefits with improved GBI and biodiversity enhancements.**
- 4. Insofar as planning permission is required, retrofitting low carbon and renewable technologies, as well as energy efficiency measures in existing buildings will be supported and significant weight will be given to the benefits of development resulting in improvements to energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions in existing buildings. Proposals for energy efficient measures in listed buildings, should consider the advice from Historic England (Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: How to Improve Energy Efficiency) and demonstrate that the maximum level of energy efficiency, energy generation and reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> impacts have been achieved whilst conserving the historical significance of the building and / or its setting.**

- 6.61. Government bodies, from the UK Parliament, to Wiltshire Council have formally acknowledged a 'Climate Change Emergency'. Land use planning is recognised as having the potential to make a valuable contribution to sustainable development and to helping to address climate change.
- 6.62. In preparing this Plan, a Climate Change survey was conducted. There were 60 responses. From those that responded, there was widespread support for eco-friendly design and features for all future housing development in Semington.
- 6.63. Other key points from the survey showed:
- 82% say green spaces and trees are essential.
  - 78% say the same for efficient, low carbon, heating and cooling and 71% for solar electric panels. 63% rate sustainable materials and construction as essential.
  - 57% believe electric charging points for cars are a vital requirement.
  - Only 8% of respondents have an electric car, but 15% say they have a charging point. 68% believe that Semington should have charging points for community use. The village hall is the location most often suggested, with the pub also a popular choice.
- 6.64. The survey also showed that most homes in Semington are reasonably well insulated. But there is a significant number of older properties, including listed buildings, which are hard to keep warm and where adequate insulation is difficult. The take-up of modern energy-saving technology is currently low.
- 6.65. A new Future Homes Standard (FHS) will be introduced in 2025 in England to create "world-leading energy efficiency standards". Ahead of the Future Homes Standard coming into force, major changes to the Building Regulations have been introduced which tighten requirements on standards for the development of new homes. It is recognised that we can anticipate additional regulations and standards as a result of the urgent need to address climate change, therefore the policies in this section seek to reinforce the importance of the need to act at the Neighbourhood Plan level to promote and support sustainable and climate responsive design where possible.

**POLICY SEM 13 – Standalone Renewable Energy Generation**

- 1. Proposals for standalone renewable energy developments, including renewable energy storage, will be supported in principle where it can be demonstrated that:**
  - a. the siting and scale of the proposal is appropriate to its setting;**
  - b. the proposal does not create an unacceptable impact on local amenity, and on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance; and,**
  - c. development does not compromise, restrict or otherwise degrade the operational capability of Keevil Airfield.**
- 2. Other existing, permitted or proposed similar developments in the locality will be taken into account so that cumulative impacts are considered.**

6.66. National Planning Policy stresses the importance on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources (NPPF paragraph 160).

6.67. Survey responses from the community indicate that there is support for a range of renewable and low carbon energy generation, but there is also a need to balance protection of our landscape. 68 per cent would support wind turbines in Semington, while 82 per cent would support solar farms. 8 per cent would not support either. 92 per cent would be more likely to support these if there was a financial benefit to Semington.

## 7. Neighbourhood Planning Steps

- 7.1. The Referendum version of the Plan was submitted to Wiltshire Council for consideration in a Parish referendum. If the referendum is successful, the Plan will be 'made'.
- 7.2. The Neighbourhood Plan policies will then be considered through the determination of planning applications for development in the parish by Wiltshire Council.
- 7.3. The Neighbourhood Plan when it comes into force will become part of the statutory development plan and used in the determination of planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- 7.4. The planning authority, Wiltshire Council, will use the adopted Development Plan, including Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. Semington Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in the parish. It will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports.
- 7.5. Any new development will be monitored closely through the planning process to ensure that policies are adhered to. After the Plan is made, each Annual Parish Council Meeting will include an update to monitor the use of the Plan in the previous year by both the parish Council and Wiltshire Council in terms of planning applications and environmental projects, together with the likely implementation and impact of the Plan for the forthcoming year.
- 7.6. There is no requirement to review or update a Neighbourhood Plan. However, policies in a Neighbourhood Plan may become out of date, for example if a Local Plan covering the neighbourhood area is adopted after the making of the Neighbourhood Plan – which will happen with the Wiltshire Local Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan can be updated in whole or in part.

.....

**Appendix: SEMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL | PRE-APPLICATION COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROTOCOL | ADOPTED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL JUNE 2023** (references to the NPPF updated December 2023).

The aim of this Protocol is to do all possible to ensure that new development in Semington is done to a high standard which reflects local issues and aspirations. Its use will contribute to improved outcomes for the current and future communities, as well as assisting applicants to make applications that accord with the aims of the Parish Council, as community representatives, the Neighbourhood Plan (at the emerging stages and when 'made' following a positive referendum result) and with those of Wiltshire Council. It is crucial for success with these aims for the community engagement to start very early in the preparation of applications, working with the communities of Semington via the Parish Council.

***Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Semington Parish Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good engagement process has been agreed and followed.***

### **Context**

The revised **National Planning Policy Framework** (2023) highlights the considerable value of pre-application involvement, for example in paragraph 39:

*"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."*

and in support of this protocol, extract from paragraph 137:

*"Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot."*

(All the relevant extracts from the revised NPPF are appended.)

The "**10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement**"<sup>33</sup> published by a group representing planning, industry and community groups states that:

*"Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs."*

The Wiltshire Council "**Statement of Community Involvement**"<sup>34</sup> (SCI) 2020 states that it encourages:

---

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-topics/planning-applications/10-commitments-effective-pre-application-engagement>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/1088/Statement-of-Community-Involvement>

*“developers and applicants to engage with local people and communities including Town and Parish Councils and with neighbours, when appropriate, before submission of a planning application. ... The government have stated that such engagement is discretionary, but it is strongly encouraged by the Council prior to the submission of applications for ten or more houses, or other large developments on sites of 1 hectare or more.”*

It is the view of Semington Parish Council that, for their community, the above should also apply to smaller developments because these can have at least as much impact on small settlements such as those in Semington parish, as on larger settlements.

The SCI outlines in detail how communities can be involved in planning applications. The Parish Council acknowledges that whilst in the early stages of considering a development proposal, applicants may wish for any discussions with Wiltshire Council to be confidential, involvement of the local community can and should happen at the earliest possible stage.

### **Process**

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, potential applicants should work with Semington Parish Council to fulfil the following principles:

- **‘Day One’ contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with our Parish Council, and through us with our local community, at the very start of any process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive.
- **Agreed Process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timetable, information and so forth of the engagement – i.e. the process to be followed.<sup>35</sup>
- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant’s role to lead and fund engagement, the Parish Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process; for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Parish Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the parish. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential methods to contact and engage them. The methods should include traditional approaches such as exhibitions and leaflets but should also maximise contacts and responses through the use of social media.
- **Agreed Scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- **Final Reporting:** The applicant should submit, with any final application, a thorough report – a full ‘audit trail’ - describing and summarising the outcomes of the engagement, showing how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been followed fully, the Parish Council

---

<sup>35</sup> There is considerable benefit for applicants in also sharing any process with Wiltshire Council, as planning authority, and securing their agreement to it.

will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it.<sup>36</sup>

*(The Wiltshire SCI suggests that “this should take the form of a statement of community involvement outlining what public consultation has been carried out and how the results of the exercise have been taken into account in the submitted application”.)*

Initial contact should be made at the very outset with the Parish Council’s Clerk.<sup>37</sup> The Parish Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial open meeting as soon as possible following this contact. The Parish Council may also request additional consultation if particularly significant local issues emerge from any list of reserved matters associated with an application. **Semington Parish Council fully support and endorse all of the above and will play their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application involvement with themselves and the wider parish community as proposals come forward.**

#### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2023 EXTRACTS (Our emphasis in bold)**

Para. 39: *“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”*

Para. 40: *“Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.”*

Para. 41: *“The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits. For their role in the planning system to be effective and positive, statutory planning consultees will need to take the same early, pro-active approach, and provide advice in a timely manner throughout the development process. This assists local planning authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping to ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs.”*

Para 137: *“Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. **Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.**”*

---

<sup>36</sup> As per the opening proviso, endorsement of an engagement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.

<sup>37</sup> clerk@semington.org.uk