

# Clackers Brook, Melksham

## Key details

<b>Name</b>	Clackers Brook
<b>Location</b>	Melksham, Wiltshire
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	750 (another 450 new homes are also expected just south of Clackers Brook)
<b>Date first homes sold</b>	2010
<b>Homes delivered to date</b>	750
<b>Percentage of affordable homes</b>	The 2008 consent called for 24% (161 homes) on-site and contributions to fund a further 40 homes off-site
<b>Average house price</b>	£289,000
<b>Land dedicated to road access and parking</b>	35%
<b>Walking distance to railway station</b>	39 minutes



## Background and context of development

With a population of around 20,000, Melksham is the fifth largest town in Wiltshire. Major employers in the town include Knorr-Bremse, a designer of railway braking systems, and Cooper Tire & Rubber Company, which operates a tyre plant, plus a number of other companies based in Hampton Business Park and Bowerhill Industrial Estate. House prices in Melksham tend to be slightly lower than the average across Wiltshire or the South West as a whole, but there has been significant investment into the town centre and new schools in recent years.

The 2011 SHMA stipulated that 71,970 new homes should be built in Wiltshire by 2026, which is on the high side of targets for the region. However, this was not carried through to the Core Strategy, which gave a figure of 42,000 over a twenty year period (2006-2026) rather than a fifteen year one, of which 10,420 was to be in South Wiltshire and 24,740 in North and West Wiltshire (excluding Swindon). This is particularly significant given that the SHMA did not split the county figure into regional aims, leaving the relatively low target stated in the Core Strategy as the only one planners have to work with. In addition, the SHMA stipulated 34,800 affordable homes, and while the proportion is still relevant, no equivalent figure was given in the Core Strategy to match the lower total housing numbers.

North and West Wiltshire have done fairly well in delivering on these targets. Planned and completed homes in new developments containing over 1,000 units in Devizes, Westbury, Warminster, Calne, Trowbridge, and Chippenham total 16,025; the Melksham development has come in the context of several larger projects in neighbouring towns. The district therefore finds itself in the relatively unusual situation of meeting housing targets in the Core Strategy, if not the SHMA. A 40% affordable housing rate has been used for the county so far, in line with the proportion in the SHMA, despite the other differences between it and the Core Strategy.



Clackers Brook is located to the east of Melksham. It is adjacent to existing suburbs, but the road access comes from a new distributor road to the east of the development. Pedestrian links between the majority of the development and the adjoining suburbs are quite limited, and there is a

consistent failure to make use of opportunities to provide walking and cycling links to these neighbouring suburbs and onward towards the town centre. Bus services are limited and it is the opposite side of Melksham from the train station, which together with the large new distributor road serving the estate helps promote a car-based culture.

The site has a relatively long planning history, with permission for the first 670 homes being granted in 2008, while the local centre received approval in 2015, and a further 450 homes to the south of Clackers Brook were approved in 2016. There has been objection on the part of residents concerning traffic implications, a state of affairs exacerbated over controversy surrounding the A350, a major road which passes through Melksham. Wiltshire Council would like to divert the A350 onto a new bypass, which could involve converting the road that adjoins Clackers Brook into a fast dual carriageway catering for lorries traveling from the M4 to Warminster, Southampton and Poole. Some in the council see this as an opportunity to bring prosperity to Melksham and its environs, but it has met opposition from residents of both the new development and the pre-existing town, many of whom would live directly adjacent to the new bypass. It's still not clear whether this will actually happen.



Looking at Wiltshire's Standard Specification for Adoption of Public Open Spaces, attached to the S106 agreement for the 450 new homes planned immediately south of Clackers Brook, it's clear why there have been hardly any trees planted in the urban extensions around Melksham and Trowbridge. The document begins with a long 'wish list of planning requirements' controlling where trees should, or rather should not be planted. This includes including no planting within 1.5m of the carriageway or 1m of the footway, no planting within 3.5m of a streetlight, no planting within a distance equal to the tree's mature height from a building or structure, and several other rules. If this wish list is followed faithfully it seems there would be few places where street trees were allowed.



## Public Realm

Urban trees	Very few except pre-existing hedgerows
Grass verges	Few, mainly alongside distributor road and hedgerows
Front gardens	Rarely
Back gardens	Yes

## Public transport, walking and cycling accessibility

There is very little in the way of facilities for pedestrians or cyclists. The public realm is limited, with most space being taken up by roads and housing. A stretch of floodplain alongside the eponymous Clackers Brook provides a green belt across the centre of the site, but little has been done to turn this into an inviting public park or greenspace. Unlike other Melksham residential developments such as Berryfield and Bowerhill, the new homes at Clackers Brook are at least contiguous with the existing town. However, as shown in site plans, the positioning of the new homes has directly blocked several potential pedestrian links to streets in the neighbouring suburbs, leaving the Clackers Brook floodplain as one of the only ways to walk or cycle towards the town centre, and the paths here are mostly unlit and unpaved.

The buses at Clackers Brook leave a lot to be desired. They are infrequent daytime services, almost completely absent at the weekend and during typical morning and evening commuting times, making travelling to work using them unlikely to be possible for most people. The main route serving the estate runs every 60 minutes 09:30 to 16:30 on weekdays. In light of the experience of other developments, it is questionable whether improving the bus service alone would solve the problems of a car-based transport culture in this case, as the private car would be likely to remain the dominant form of transport. Nevertheless, the absence of buses running to sites like the railway station or Bowerhill industrial estate means that residents travelling there even infrequently must do so by other means.

Destination	Company	Route numbers	Weekday daytime frequency	Weekday evening frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Travel time	Location of bus/train stop	Last return time
Melksham town centre	FromeBus	15	Every 60 mins 09:30 – 16:30	None	Two journeys only	None	4-8 mins	Along distributor road	16:15
Melksham railway station	FromeBus	15	Every 60 mins 09:30-16:30 (with 8-11 min walk to station)	None	Two journeys only	None	18-20 mins	Along distributor road	16:12

Train travel in Melksham is more of a success story, albeit one that remains difficult to access from Clackers Brook itself. Given its distance from the development and the lack of buses, the station is realistically only accessed by car, but there is very little parking to accommodate this. However, Melksham station is situated on a branch line between Chippenham and Trowbridge, and until December 2013 saw just two trains per day in each direction. With help from the award-winning



‘Save the Train’ campaign, the service has since been improved to roughly every two hours Mon-Sat, and despite the lack of a direct route to key local destinations such as Bath and Bristol, usage of Melksham station has grown by over 500% from 12,080 journeys in 2012-13 to 74,666 in 2016-17. This spectacular growth has led to the single carriage trains being replaced by two-carriage trains.



## Local Facilities

A small commercial centre has been built within Clackers Brook, including a Co-operative supermarket, a pub, and a small number of shops and takeaways, with a car park in the centre. A primary school has also been relocated close by. For most other things, getting to facilities means walking for around 30 minutes to Melksham town centre, or as is more likely, driving for around 5 minutes when there is no traffic. Buses link to the town centre, but only on weekday daytimes.



The Clackers Brook floodplain remains open as a greenspace, but it does not really have the features of a proper public park. We heard from a local resident of the exciting day when the area flooded and seven species of fish could be found, having made their way here from the River Avon.

Type of facility	Plans and current state of progress within development	Built yet within site?	Closest example outside the development	Estimated time to reach nearest example outside development			
				Walking	Cycling	Driving	Public transport
Convenience store	Co-operative Food	Yes					
Café / restaurant	No plans	No	Melksham High Street	27 minutes	8 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes
Drinking establishment	The Water Meadow	Yes					
High street shops	No plans	No	Melksham High Street	27 minutes	8 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes
Supermarket	Co-operative Food	Yes					
Nursery	Forest & Sandridge CE Primary School	Yes					
Primary school	Forest & Sandridge CE Primary School	Yes					
Secondary school	No plans	No	Melksham Oak Community School	32 minutes	9 minutes	4 minutes	No direct link
Park	Clacker's Brook floodplain greenspace on site (no plans for full park)	Partial (Open space)	King George V Park	27 minutes	8 minutes	4 minutes	9 minutes
Playground	Already complete on northern part of site	Yes					
Playing fields	Already complete next to primary school	Yes					
Tennis courts	No plans	No	King George V Park	27 minutes	8 minutes	4 minutes	9 minutes
Leisure centre	No plans	No	City Fitness	41 minutes	14 minutes	8 minutes	28 minutes (incl. 20 min walk)
Swimming pool	No plans	No	Melksham Blue Pool	28 minutes	8 minutes	5 minutes	13 minutes
Wildlife area	No plans	No	Conigre Mead Nature Reserve	35 minutes	10 minutes	7 minutes	18 minutes (incl. 10 min walk)
Community Centre	No plans	No	Melksham Assembly Hall	28 minutes	8 minutes	5 minutes	13 minutes
Daytime / evening classes	No plans	No	Melksham Forest Community Centre	31 minutes	9 minutes	5 minutes	16 minutes (incl. 12 min walk)
Medical facilities	No plans	No	Spa Medical Centre	17 minutes	5 minutes	3 minutes	No direct link
Post office	No plans	No	Church Street Post Office	28 minutes	8 minutes	6 minutes	13 minutes
Library	No plans	No	Melksham Library	28 minutes	8 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes
Co-working space	No plans	No	Kingsbury Square	30 minutes	9 minutes	5 minutes	15 minutes

## Developer Contributions



The S106 and S278 payments at Clackers Brook include a total of £275,350 towards various minor highway works and £435,000 towards public transport. The S106 agreement states that the public transport contribution should be used in the first year to comprise an on-demand taxi service for residents and in subsequent years to use all reasonable endeavours to procure a timetable service linking the development with the town centre.

*S106 and S278 payments relating to outline planning application W/04/01895/OUTES, as of July 2017:*

Contribution	Narrative	Amount	Paid?
Affordable housing	To fund 40 units off-site	£1,550,000	Yes (still awaiting one part of the final tranche)
Arts	For publicly accessible works of art	£20,000	Uncertain (artworks installed)
Open Space Commuted Sum	For the maintenance of open	To be calculated at time of transfer	Not yet
Surface Water Attenuation Basins Commuted Sum	For the maintenance of surface water attenuation basins	To be calculated at time of transfer	Not yet
1 <sup>st</sup> Highway	For new toucan crossing and shuttle working on A3102 at Lowbourne	£69,400	Yes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Highway	Minor alterations to the Semington Road roundabout	£19,750	Yes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Highway	For a pelican crossing and associated works at the Farmers roundabout	£71,200	Yes
4 <sup>th</sup> Highway	To upgrade the traffic signals on the A350	£56,000	Yes
5 <sup>th</sup> Highway	Replacement/additional road signage	£15,000	Yes
6 <sup>th</sup> Highway	New and upgraded cycleway and pedestrian facilities on Snowberry Lane	£14,000	Yes
7 <sup>th</sup> Highway	Works on the C155 at Lacock	£5,000	Yes
8 <sup>th</sup> Highway	Consultation and any agreed consequent measures on Snarilton Lane	£25,000	Yes
Public Transport	Towards public transport improvements	£435,000	Yes
Primary School Education	Provision of 210 places within a new primary school on site	£1,926,000	£192,600 paid in 2011, the remainder uncertain

## Summary

The street scene at Clackers Brook is mostly devoid of trees or other greenery. The local stream and its floodplain provide a green space running through the middle of the estate, but this has few of the features of a genuine public park. A new local centre has been built, including a pub and a Co-operative store, and the local primary school has been relocated on site. However, for other needs, residents will mostly have to visit Melksham town centre.

There has been little attempt to provide good quality pedestrian, cycle or bus routes from Clackers Brook to the town centre. Instead, homes have been sited in ways that block some potential links to the neighbouring suburbs. The bus service may be useful for shoppers needing to reach the large supermarkets on the other side of town, but since it only runs between the hours of 09:30 and 16:30 it's no good for commuters. Conversely, road access is easy, with a new distributor road running around the outer edge of the estate. All of this contributes to the car-based culture that was readily apparent on the site visit. A further concern is that the distributor road may one day become a dual carriageway and a bypass for Melksham, which could have major impacts on the homes that lie close to the road.

