

Viney's Farm

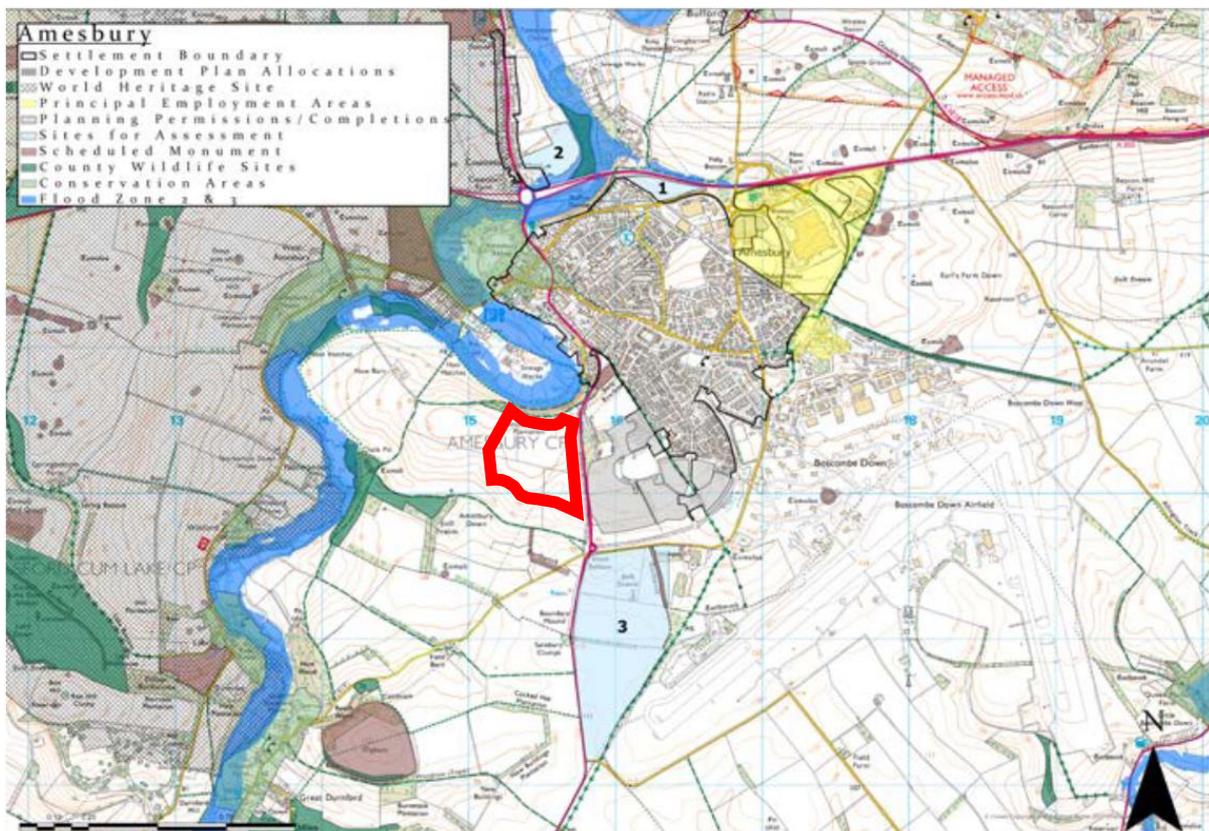
Campaigning to stop 1,200 new houses in South West Amesbury

Background: The Local Plan

Amesbury has been identified as the site for 350 new homes in Wiltshire Council's Local Plan – the policy that sets out where new homes and businesses are going to be built in the county. The three sites identified by Wiltshire Council in the last round of consultation are shown on the map below in blue and numbered (taken from the Council's 'Planning for Amesbury' consultation document). They are:

1. Land North of London Road
2. Land to rear of Countess Services
3. Land adjacent to Stockport Road at Stock Bottom.

Building new homes in sustainable locations in Amesbury is supported by local people, and these sites could accommodate the identified need of 350 homes. However, an additional site to the South West of the town – the red area added to the map below – has now also been put forward to the Council by a developer. This large 182 acre site would accommodate 1,200 houses. We call on Wiltshire Council to reject this submission.



1,200 new houses proposed for Amesbury

In September 2021, Wiltshire Council published the result of the consultation on its Local Plan. The Council's original consultation documents called for 350 new homes in Amesbury to meet local housing needs.

But a property developer called Shaftesbury International Services Ltd submitted a scheme for an additional 1,200 houses to be built on Viney's Farm, off Salisbury Road to the South West of Amesbury. This was submitted to the Council with a 'vision document' and 'masterplan' for how these houses would be built and laid out – showing that this is a serious and real threat.

We are a group of concerned residents of Amesbury and the Woodford Valley who want Wiltshire Council to stick to the scale of housebuilding originally proposed for the town, and not to increase it fivefold at the behest of property developers.

This note describes the proposal – and why it should not be included in Wiltshire's Local Plan.

The proposal

The submission by Shaftesbury International Services to the Local Plan consultation says:

“SIS consider that the overall housing requirement for Wiltshire should be increased from 45,630 dwellings to 50,204 dwellings for the period 2018-2040. For the same period, the residual housing requirement for Amesbury should be increased from 350 dwellings to a minimum of approximately 1,500 dwellings.”

They want these extra houses to be built on greenfield land by the River Avon.

Landscape and visual objections

The landscape around Amesbury is in particular need of protection because of its relationship with the Stonehenge and Avebury UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The site occupies around 74 hectares/ 182 acres of green fields – the size of about 117 football pitches. If this development went ahead, it would be clearly visible in local views of the Avon Valley, and make a substantial change to the local landscape.

The land has views to and from the Stonehenge and Avebury UNESCO World Heritage Site. Part of the proposed development – which sits on a prominent ridge in the landscape – is defined in the World Heritage Site management plan as an area of visual sensitivity. The effect on the setting of the World Heritage Site would therefore be harmful.

The land is also within the Special Landscape Area, a designation applied by Wiltshire Council to protect landscapes of county-wide importance.

Ecology and wildlife objections

The Viney's Farm site runs alongside the River Avon, which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The river is protected as a valuable chalk stream, because of the internationally rare and threatened species which live there, including invertebrates, birds, fish, and mammals.

The stretch of the River Avon closest to the site is already recorded as being in an unfavourable condition, with a need to address existing issues associated with phosphates from the adjacent waste water treatment works. The additional stress of water and pollution runoff from 1,200

houses and new roads would be extremely harmful and would cause the habitat value of the river to decline.

Transport objections

The Viney's Farm land is not located within walking distance of any local services or facilities – a key consideration when assessing a new site for such major development.

This table below shows walking distances between parts of the site and local services. Only the new houses closest to the road junctions would be able to walk to the nearest primary school within 15 minutes and Amesbury's only secondary school is even further away. The walking routes into Amesbury from here are also very steep, and not suitable for older people, wheelchairs, or pushchairs. The vast majority of residents on this site would be likely to drive everywhere.

VINNEYS FARM SUMMARY			
Destination	Closest	Middle	Far
Amesbury Archer Primary School	13	21	31
Christ the King Catholic Primary School	18	26	36
Amesbury Church of England Primary School	24	33	43
The Stonehenge School	23	31	41
The Camelot	25	33	43
Amesbury Abbey	30	39	49
TESCO Solstice Park	32	41	51
Co-Op	24	32	42
ALDI	24	32	43
Co-Op Boscombe Down	17	24	35
Co-Op Solstice Park	36	45	55
Lidl	33	41	52
Solstice Park	36	45	55

This would put a huge number of cars onto local roads, causing congestion, increasing carbon emissions, and putting more stress on car parking spaces in the town.

Wiltshire Council has declared a climate emergency and should not consider unsustainable development sites that will force new residents into relying on cars for their daily journeys.

The cost of delivering the infrastructure needed to provide road access would reduce the site's ability to deliver other local benefits like affordable housing.

What do local people think?

Because this site was only submitted to the Council's latest consultation rather than the 'call for sites' when it should have been promoted, there has been no chance for the public and other technical stakeholders to review the proposals and comment.

A petition against the allocation of the site has collected, at time of writing, over 900 signatures online and on paper.

Some of the public comments include:

- "The GPs, dentists, and schools are already full."
- "The town has insufficient doctors and dentist surgeries at present, and the infrastructure of the town is not adequate for a huge increase in housing."
- "This is way more housing than can be supported by services in Amesbury."

