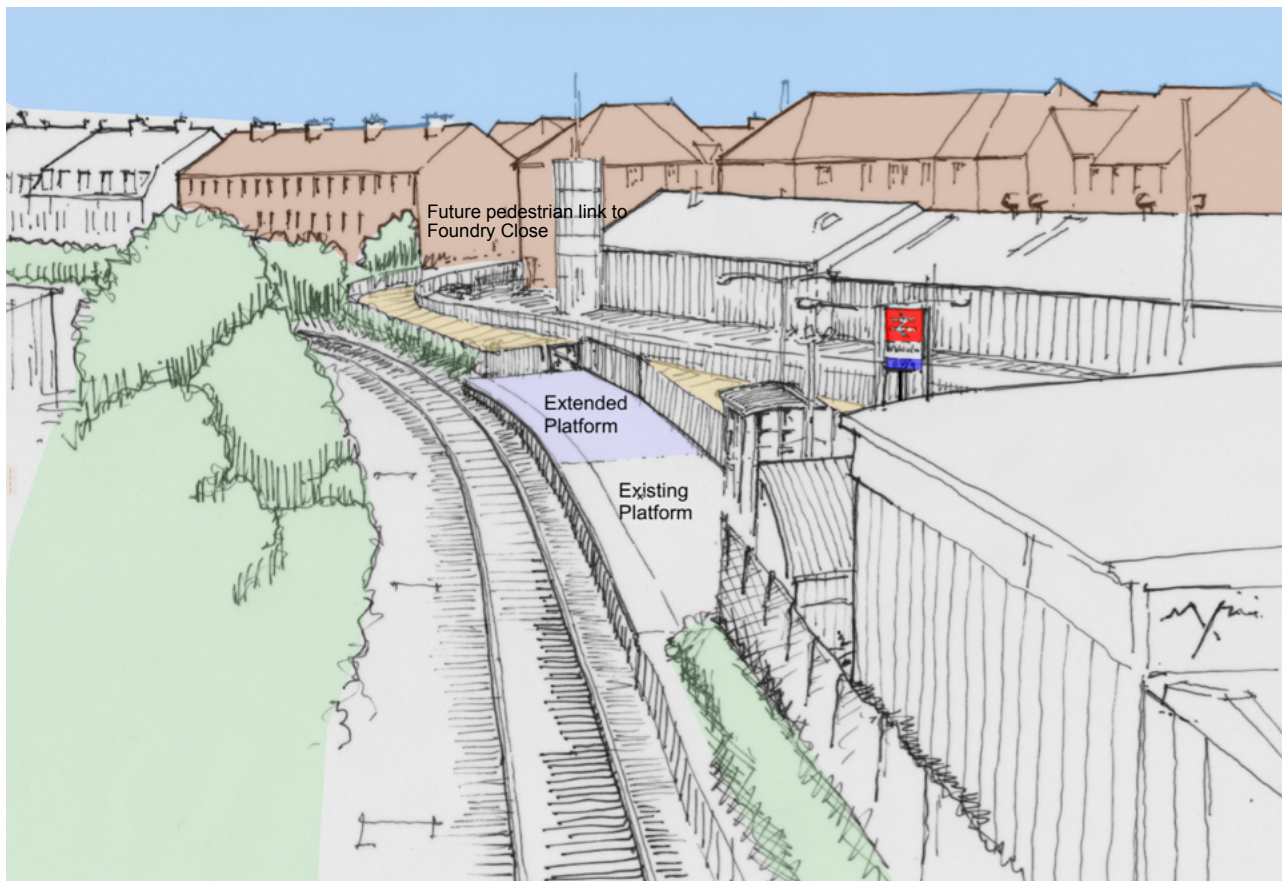


Proposed Parking expansion and Community Cafe at Melksham Station For Transwilt's CIC

0352-DAS-03

Supporting Statement
February 2019



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Melksham Station forms part of the Transwilt's rail route between Swindon and Westbury. There are proposals, supported by GWR to extend the route to Southampton Airport. The station has undergone significant expansion in passenger numbers over recent years. Network Rail have doubled the length of the platform to support increased numbers and longer 2 car trains introduced in January 2018.
- 1.2. This application relates to a first stage of implementation of access improvements to Melksham Station, comprising an expansion of the existing council run car park by linking into the adjacent (former Reeds) open storage site and the provision of

passenger and community facilities including a WC and cafe by conversion of an existing building. It is therefore primarily an expansion of the existing car park through a change of use of the adjacent site.

- 1.3. No alteration is proposed to Station Approach, the existing adjacent sites, nor the vehicular or pedestrian access to them. There is an opportunity to create an additional pedestrian route across Station Approach, on the pattern of the existing pedestrian access as part of the proposals with the co-operation of Wiltshire Council, however the proposal is not dependent upon this additional pedestrian link.
- 1.4. A pre-application enquiry (18/07353/PREAPP) was undertaken by Kingsley Hampton of Wiltshire Council and Penny Gilg of Atkins as part of the Melksham Station Masterplan for a wider and more comprehensive range of improvements. The process and timing for the comprehensive proposals, which include a new northern pedestrian and cycle access from Foundry Close will be longer term. Transwilt's CIC, in negotiations with Wiltshire Council, GWR, Network Rail, has the opportunity to implement an initial part of the proposals to achieve significant improvements in station accessibility to support the ongoing increase in passenger numbers. This application relates to this smaller initial package of work, financed by Transwilt's from community grant funding sources.



2. Change of use

- 2.1. The proposal is for a change of use from a use that falls under employment use within Policy CP35, to parking and community facilities.
- 2.2. The site has been vacant since Reeds vacated in September 2016 except for a brief period in 2018 when it was used as storage space and site facilities by Network Rail's contractors in connection with the expansion of the railway platform at Melksham Station. The site is constrained and difficult to develop for any substantial employment use. The existing small industrial building on the site is uninsulated and in poor condition with a number of holes in the cladding. It does not comply with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) as it would be unable to achieve an E rating in an EPC. Nevertheless, the adjacent VW AUDI centre are interested in taking

over the building to integrate with their current site operations. This part of the site will be retained by Wiltshire Council to be let or sold separately and does not form part of this application.

- 2.3. The change of use of the former sales and welfare building to a community cafe and WC would require staffing by both paid and volunteer staff. In addition, the piazza area is a multi-purpose area to encourage pop-up, social enterprise and local community businesses.
- 2.4. With the retention of this building by Wiltshire Council, it is not considered that there will be any net loss in employment numbers from the proposed change of use of part of this site to car parking and community facilities.
- 2.5. The purpose of the proposed change of use is to improve accessibility and use of Melksham Station. This would improve social mobility within Melksham and the surrounding area by providing improved access to alternative employment. There is considerable Department of Transport and other evidence, including “The Value of Station Investment - Research on Regenerative Impacts” published by Steer Davies Gleave with Network Rail in November 2011 that improving rail infrastructure is linked with improved investment in an area, contributing to economic development, regeneration and community and social wellbeing. With the recent changes at Cooper Tire in the vicinity of the site, improved rail access can help to contribute to regeneration and investment in the wider area as a whole and provide accessibility to employment in neighbouring towns. It is therefore considered that this proposal would constitute sustainable development as set out in the NPPF and Core Strategy.
- 2.6. The building change of use will provide a more attractive gateway to Melksham for those arriving by rail.
- 2.7. The lease being currently negotiated with Wiltshire Council for the land is for 6 years with a 3 year break, and is subject to planning. There is a limited opportunity for Transwilt CIC to take on this project. The site is currently vacant, and has been largely empty since Reeds vacated in September 2016. This is a lost revenue for Wiltshire Council, and they are keen to address this. It is not known whether the commercial demands of any alternative lease arrangements would make this site unavailable over the medium or longer term for implementation of the more comprehensive Station Masterplan scheme. The scheme cannot be implemented by GWR at this stage due to financial constraints of the limited period remaining on their current train operating franchise. They are currently in negotiations for a 2 year direct award extension of the franchise.
- 2.8. Once the wider scheme comes forward it is anticipated that alterations will be made to these currently proposed arrangements to co-ordinate with these proposals. These will be subject to a separate application in due course. It may be that in due course GWR or alternative train operator taking over the car parking as part of the wider scheme which is why a break point is in the lease. However in the short to medium term this proposal is the only way to increase parking provision and station

accessibility, and to resiliently retain the possibility of the wider future proposals and a sustainable income for community rail.

3. Parking demand

- 3.1. Car parking is central to the expansion of the station usage. Existing parking of around 30 spaces is owned and maintained by Wiltshire Council, and is free, but mostly full 20 of the spaces are within the existing fenced car park area, and 10 outside, of which 8 are reserved for use by Novacast. As the demand can now grow by a factor of 3, more spaces need to be provided. As outlined above, although consideration was given to partial use of the former Reeds site for the hub cafe, consultations and considerations have led to the conclusion that the full site should be used, including increased parking provision.
- 3.2. As part of the considerations, the existing council car parking space would form part of the total parking area, and would be united with the Reeds Demise as set out in the section above. The site viability is based upon this assumption but without the warehouse building and surrounding area. The 8 spaces currently used by Novacast would not be included within the lease and are not within the application area. The remaining 2 spaces outside the fence are within the area and would be reserved for train operator and Hub staff.
- 3.3. In addition to these 2 separate spaces, the proposal provides for 58 paying car parking places (including 4 electric charging stations). This may vary slightly as marked on the accompanying drawings if Wiltshire Council retains more land to access the retained industrial building as described above. There will also be 2 motorcycle spaces. There is the possibility to allocate some spaces for disabled parking, which would slightly reduce parking numbers, but it is envisaged that these would remain at their current location adjacent to the station platform.
- 3.4. The area adjacent to the Station and platform, currently 10 parking spaces including 1 disabled and 1 taxi space will remain, but will be reduced to increase parking provision for disabled parking (4 spaces) and free pick-up/drop off (4 spaces) with a 20 minute waiting time. This does not form part of this application, but the intention is that these spaces would be monitored and controlled by Transwits under agreements with GWR and Wiltshire Council, along with preventing the current ad-hoc parking within Station Approach. 5 Motorcycle parking spaces are also available.
- 3.5. Research has shown that a price of £4.00 would be in line with Trowbridge Station and is cheaper than existing all-day parking in Melksham, and would provide the required viability. Depending upon growth scenarios, it will take 2-3 years to reach a sustainable operation. The parking would be managed through Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR).
- 3.6. Cycle parking racks are shown within the community cafe area, and adjacent to the electric car charging points. This facilitates provision of electric cycle parking points.

Provision for 18 cycle parking spaces would be available with a Sheffield parking stand arrangement as recommended by Sustrans, However this could be doubled to around 36 spaces with a more high density arrangement. There is also scope for alternative or significantly more cycle parking along the fence line to the Hub Piazza if demand increases, or alongside the longer term implementation of the northern access route to Foundry Close as indicated on the accompanying drawings. The existing cycle parking provision on the platform edge would be maintained as existing.

4. Highway, cycle and Pedestrian Safety Issues.

- 4.1. The initial objective is to increase the provision of parking to meet the growth in passenger numbers as set out in more detail in the sections below. The concern with the proposals considered through the pre-application process was with increased potential conflict between pedestrian and vehicular movements by removing the existing fence lines and opening up the space to create a shared circulatory area. The pre-app response suggested retaining the existing car park access to remove the majority of cars from the area in front of the station. This proposal retains the existing car park entrance, removing the fence and grading the levels between the existing car park and the car park extension as suggested in the pre-app response.
- 4.2. The only private cars proceeding past the car park entrance would be for disabled parking and pick up and drop off and for the existing commercial units. Access to the remaining commercial units will remain unchanged for commercial and heavy goods vehicles. Commercial vehicle movements will be reduced by the change of use of the application site from open storage, which has comprised heavy plant and large commercial vehicles, and this will be a significant advantage to highway and pedestrian safety in this area.
- 4.3. The new ramp between the existing and extended car park area would be approximately 8m long to achieve a grade of 1:15 suitable for pedestrian and vehicular use. This would also be used for parking and a pedestrian zone would be marked outside of the 6m manoeuvring space for parking vehicles which would be shared with cyclists.
- 4.4. The proposal includes a cycle parking provision adjacent to the Hub building.



Cycle access would be through the car park entrance, down the new ramp, and then around the marked pedestrian route to the Piazza, at which point cyclists would be required to dismount over the shared space and to park their bicycles with the racks. The cycle racks would offer charging provision, and may be expanded to provide

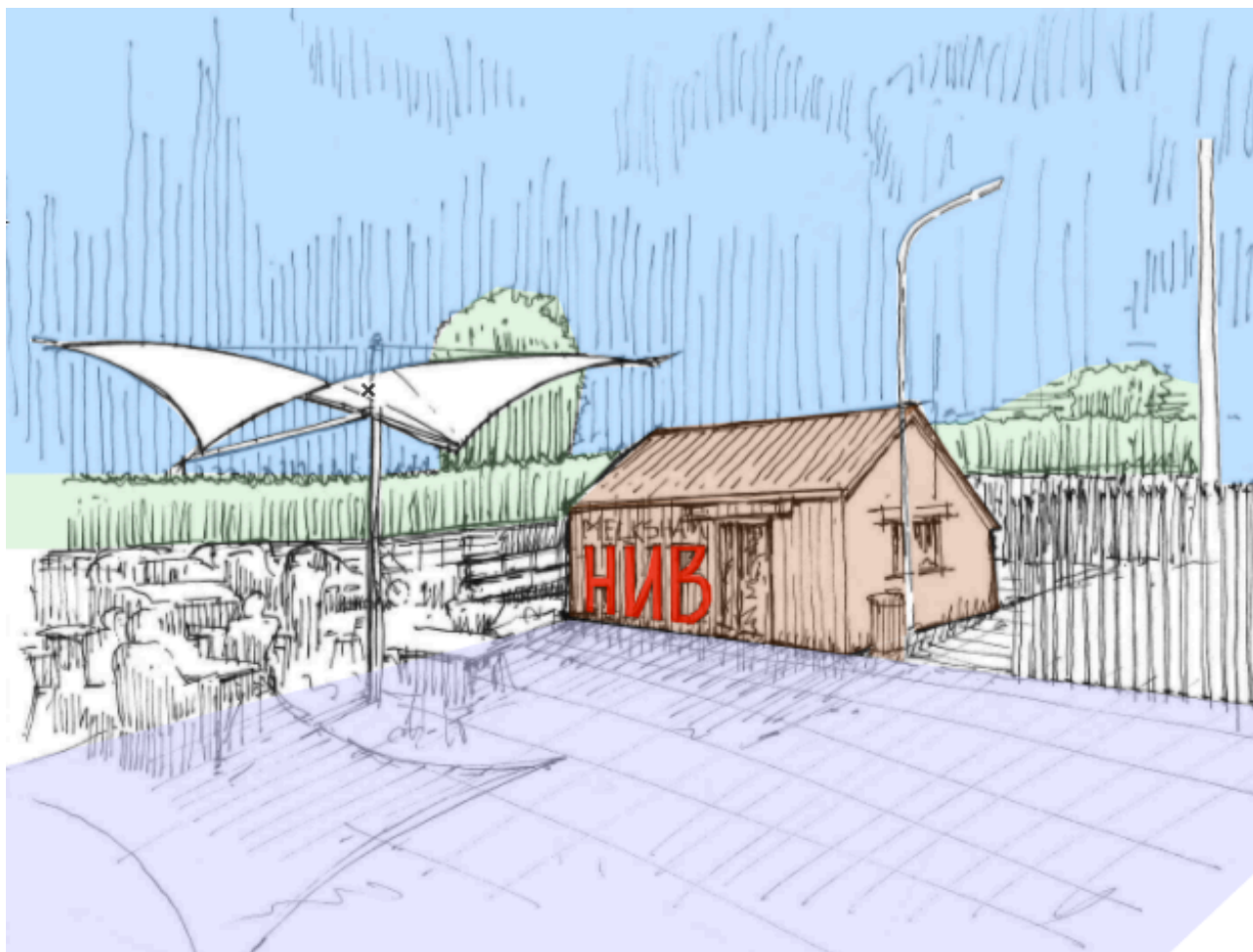
cycle hire in due course once the range of community resources and facilities is expanded.

- 4.5. Although the wider station forecourt area will not be within the area leased to Transwilt and is partly owned by Network Rail and by Wiltshire Council, Transwilt would require an agreement with the owners to enforce parking restrictions over their land, which would further reduce the hazards caused by ad-hoc parking. Along with the reduction traffic movement across this space to this site compared to the former Reeds operation, the objectives outlined through the pre-app to reduce vehicle conflicts will be met.
- 4.6. Other aspects of the pre-app scheme which will be seen as beneficial are outside the scope of this application, but do not conflict with the current proposals, which are intended as a first stage towards full implementation. The inclusion of improvements to Melksham Station within the Reg 123 list for CIL expenditure is intended to facilitate the implementation of these other improvements over the long term. These are intended to include a bus stop to co-ordinate with the service operator, new steps from Bath Rd, and will be subject to separate applications in due course. The shorter term implementation of this increase in parking provision will make an interim contribution to the accessibility, usability, and public awareness of Melksham Station, and will contribute to the take up of more sustainable and alternative means of transport, contributing to sustainable development.
- 4.7. The application also includes the provision of posts for mounting of services and signage including parking signage, lighting, CCTV monitoring for both parking charges (ANPR) and for safety and security. Monitoring and management would be carried out by a member of the British Parking Association (BPA) in accordance with their Code of Practice.
- 4.8. The proposal includes fast electric charging points for 4 vehicles, and this could be expanded as demand increases with the uptake of electric vehicles.
- 4.9. In addition to the existing pedestrian route from the car park to the station, an additional route could be facilitated from the proposed Piazza area, controlled by the location of a new gate through the fence. This will cross the shared station forecourt space at the narrowest point and the suggestion is that this is marked with lines, using the same approach as the existing pedestrian route.
- 4.10. Although this is not essential to the provision of the Hub and increased parking area, it is considered to offer greater convenience to station users. Wiltshire council have indicated that they would wish to encourage pedestrians to use this route past the hub rather than the current crossing past Melksham Tyres to improve safety. They are also looking into the provision of a pedestrian landing point at the current separation of routes between the Nocacast and Wiltshire Council sites to further improve pedestrian safety, which would co-ordinate well with this proposal.

4.11. This pedestrian route would be outside the applicant's demise and control, although the gate to facilitate this subject to the necessary agreements is included within the application. Marking of the pedestrian route would be undertaken by Wiltshire Council as the landowners of the station forecourt area alongside enforcement of parking restrictions to be negotiated. Similarly the disabled parking and drop off spaces adjacent to the existing platform are in the control of GWR and not the applicant, and revisions to existing markings will be negotiated separately with them.

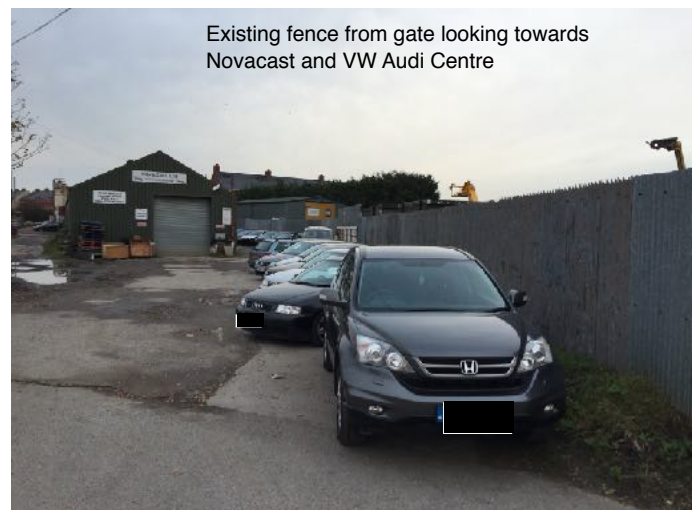
5. Station Hub/Cafe, Piazza and Design matters.

5.1. Central to the idea of providing customer facilities such as toilets, train information, shelter, and refreshments is the idea of a community hub and cafe. This will provide a building with staff present during train service hours.



5.2. The Hub will need to provide not only teas and coffees, but provide information and support to users of the railway. It may be that the local business employees may also want to use the cafe for sandwiches etc, providing a local service and increasing its economic potential.

- 5.3. It may be that the parking is taken over by GWR as part of the wider proposals and parking package, at which point it may be feasible to extend or replace the building. Again, this will be subject to a separate application in due course.
- 5.4. The proposal converts the existing administration building into a “Station Hub” comprising a small internal waiting area with a WC suitable for wheelchair users, and services including hot and cold water and electricity suitable for the provision of a pop up cafe to be run by the community. This will include space for a Community rail volunteer to provide advice and assistance on the rail service and to liaise with the public. There is significant community interest in this facility and it is intended that community use will increase over time.
- 5.5. Consideration has been given through the development of proposals to extending or replacing the existing building. Budgetary constraints at this stage have led to the need to retain and convert the existing building into the “Station Hub”, and an additional need for storage and service space. The intended works include improvements to the building fabric to improve it’s performance including roof insulation and cavity wall insulation. Solar panels (Photovoltaic) will be installed on the roof to reduce electricity consumption.
- 5.6. The space within the converted existing building is limited, and this application includes for a small metal storage shed of 2.8 x 1.5m to be located within the service yard area to provide additional secure storage for the community and as additional space to accommodate services, utilities and control panels required to service the parking area. There would be adequate remaining space within the fenced service yard for domestic size waste and recycling bins, and to give access to the store. The store would sit within and lower than the existing fence and the fence to be re-used around the service yard.
- 5.7. At the front of the Station Hub, an area is retained as a pedestrian Piazza or public open space. The intention would be to improve this area over time, but initial implementation will be economical and straightforward using and consolidating existing surfaces only. A fabric canopy would also be installed to provide some shelter from the sun and rain for those using the facility and to act as a focus for the open space. Fixed and movable outdoor seating would be arranged around and below this in an arrangement and styles to be determined with potential sponsors and the community.
- 5.8. It is also an aspiration to replace the existing high profiled metal fencing and gate with a more attractive and more visually open alternative to improve the visibility between the station and the



Piazza and hub, but this will be dependent on funds available from fundraising and from revenue from parking in the longer term.

- 5.9. Space is allocated within the open area for temporary and pop up stands and stalls with power supply provided alongside the electric car charging points. Three spaces are provisionally allowed at present, but this could be increased according to demand and community use. This is consistent with the ACoRP, community rail model throughout the country. Examples are well used at other established community rail hubs and stations. From their publication “ACoRP Community Stations - Innovative community uses for railway stations and land”, Section 4 - The station as a market. “Pop-up supports small to medium businesses that are local to our stations..... It gives local entrepreneurs the chance to set up a temporary shop.....A pop-up can be as simple as a person promoting their services...or as a full shop in the station. 150 businesses have now given pop-up a go at 17 Virgin Trains stations. It’s exactly the sort of big break that can turn fledgling business into a popular and profitable part of the community”. Huddersfield Station has pop-up stalls during the evening rush hour including a local bakery, cake stall and flower seller. Monthly pop-up stalls at Preston include a local bookseller, cheese stall, pie shop and candle maker.
- 5.10. Space can also be made available for other communal and service functions such as Amazon Lockers and other on line shopping pick up points and arrangements to enable commuters and travellers to pick up items in co-ordination with their journey.

6. Melksham Railway Station and growth.

- 6.1. The proposals are intended to support the growth of Melksham Station to improve connectivity and access to sustainable transport. Over recent years, trains have been upgraded from 1 carriage to 2 carriages, and 9 trains a day to 13 is timetabled for 2019. This is nearly a 3 fold increase in capacity, a little over 200,000 passenger journeys will be possible.
- 6.2. Typically during the week there could be around 140 passengers using the station at present. The new capacity from the expanded trains and platform will allow that to grow to around 400 passengers per day (2 journeys per passenger).
- 6.3. This work builds upon the Atkins report to develop a preferred option (Option 1d) for utilising the former Reeds site into the station supporting infrastructure and suggests that facilitating further growth through providing further parking for cars and bikes, a community cafe, and in the longer term, better facilities for bus services will both facilitate the increasing demand for railway journeys and have wider economic and social benefits within Melksham and Wiltshire.
- 6.4. It explores the question of cost and viability of increasing the parking provision and providing a community cafe alongside the wider infrastructure improvements to the platforms, facilities and access.

7. Objectives

7.1. Transwilt's CIC objectives are to enable further growth in passenger numbers. This will be achieved in part through removing “blockages” that will prevent further capacity. An example of this is car parking. If there are limitations in the supply of car parking then potential customers will simply waste time looking for parking, and may decide to drive instead. In addition the existing facilities need to be improved as the quality of experience will also have an impact both on returning customers and on word of mouth.

7.2. In a study for Wiltshire Council, Atkins undertook a survey identifying the top improvements that existing passengers wanted. These are shown in Atkins Figure 7.1 enclosed above, and reflect the improvements that Transwilt would like to bring about. Certain of these will be required on the Station and Platform itself, and must be provided by others. Those that can be facilitated by the proposal include:

7.2.1. Toilets

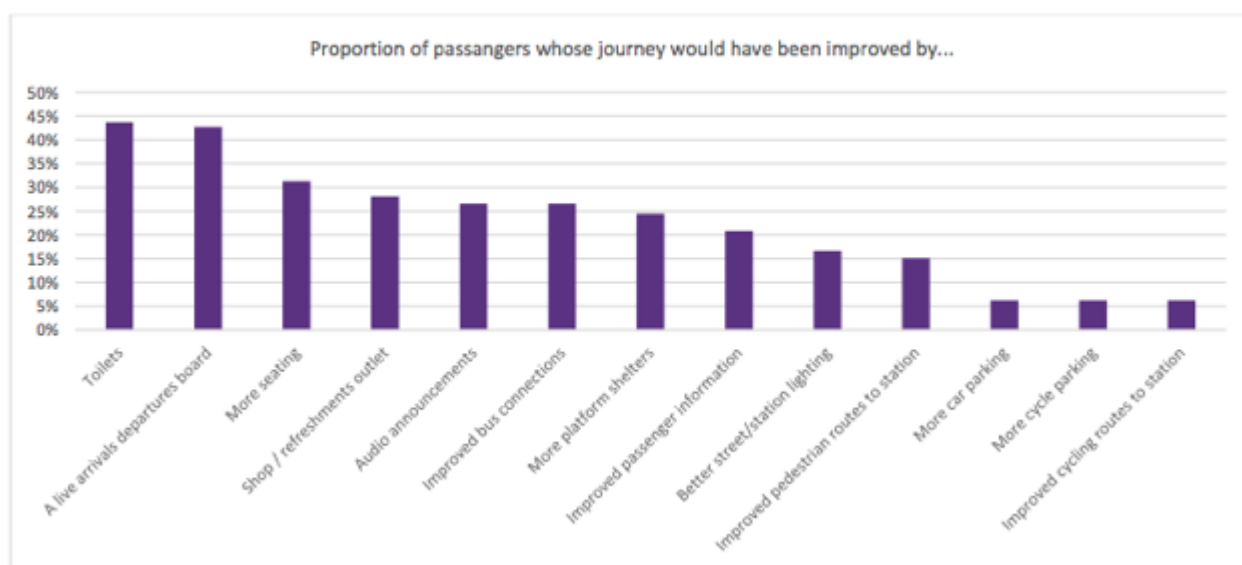
7.2.2. A live arrivals departures board

7.2.3. Seating (cafe)

7.2.4. Shop/Refreshments outlet.

7.2.5. More car parking, More cycle parking.

Figure 7-1 Support for improvements from those surveyed



7.3. It also facilitates and works alongside

7.3.1. Audio announcements (Possible Platform announcements could be relayed to the cafe, extending range and awareness)

7.3.2. Improved Bus connections (proximity to cafe, and live arrivals departure board visible by bus driver will improve connections)

7.3.3.Improved Passenger Information (see 2.2.2 above)

7.3.4.Improved pedestrian routes to station (facilitates implementation of Atkins access proposals)

8. Growing a Railway station

8.1. Transwilt has been managing both the demand and supply of the demand for trains. It is clear that with both further marketing and accommodating the latent demand, with the appropriate supply of services, it would be possible to grow the passenger numbers to around 200,000 passenger journeys per annum.

8.2. Short term demand

8.3. A closer inspection of demand helps to understand passenger choices and thereby the reasons for the growth in passenger journeys.

8.4. A shift from car to rail for existing journeys will be largely economic and the choice will be based on information readily to hand. As “news” of the railway station at Melksham has spread more people will investigate the feasibility of changing mode from car to rail. This will continue to grow passenger numbers for the short term. In turn this “news” will continue to spread as long as the journey is feasible.

8.5. Medium term demand and economic growth

8.6. When making a choice about where to live, to change job, most people research the choice. A railway station will be an attractor for any home buyer. If you already live in Melksham and are considering further or higher education, work experience, or career then a railway station may be the best choice rather than driving to Chippenham, Bath or Swindon. In considering where to live, many home buyers consist of 2 people in work. A railway facilitates flexibility for at least one of those people and helps make a choice to move to Melksham.

8.7. Employers may choose to continue to locate or to relocate to Melksham in part due to the railway to gain a wider employment pool and to facilitate business journeys e.g. to clients.

8.8. The benefits to Melksham and to Wiltshire are of economic growth and a reduction in car journeys. Further growth within Melksham is a combination of jobs and home building. The continued growth of the railway journeys is linked to this growth.

8.9. Long term growth and Social benefits

8.10. Increase in the number of people using the railway station will inevitably lead to a long term improvement in the site around the railway station as investors are prepared to pay greater rents. The prospective hotel at the Leekes site would be convenient for the station, in particular the northern pedestrian access shown within the Station Masterplan.

8.11. There are further social benefits to Melksham and Wiltshire through a change in modal choice through reduced congestion and pollution. There are also 2020 and 2050 carbon targets for the UK that include transport targets.

8.12. Supply limitations

8.13. There are also factors that will limit the growth of railway journeys if not adequately facilitated. These are:

8.13.1. Parking, walking and cycling routes;

8.13.2. Public transport; ie. buses

8.13.3. The railway schedule;

8.13.4. The number of coaches on each train that stops at Melksham;

8.14. This proposal implements an initial stage to contribute to the long term masterplan for the site, building upon the options prepared by Atkins, to eventually include improved routes for foot passengers and a turning circle for buses.

8.15. A cafe containing toilets, shelter, train information, and live departures/arrivals also deals with many of the points raised by the Atkins report as shown in Atkins diagram 7-1 and section 2 above.

8.16. As Transwilt CIC move forward they will need to consider the sustainability of the provision of community facilities, and the intention is for parking revenue to subsidise the provision and maintenance of the community space and facilities.

9. Community Involvement

9.1. The community and local companies have been involved throughout development of these proposals and feedback has informed their development. The following organisations have been particularly involved in and have contributed to proposals.

9.2. Melksham Rail users Group: Have been actively involved since the inception of the project, and have led the engagement with Melksham Town Groups.

9.3. Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Council: Have received presentations on proposals as they have developed, and have given feedback leading to the development of proposals. They have supported with grants totalling £10,000 to support the development of proposals.

9.4. Melksham Area Board: Has received several project updates and presentations, and have supported proposals with grants totalling £10,000 and have made a further grant of £1,000 toward the provision of public toilets.

9.5. Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems at Bowerhill, Melksham: Have been seeking a stronger community engagement and the Melksham Station project is being supported with a long term sponsorship of funding and volunteer resource.

- 9.6. Whilst feedback from consultations to date has indicated a demand for a more substantial community provision than is included in this application, funds are not available for more extensive proposals which will require a larger building footprint.
- 9.7. By securing the opportunity and by fully involving the community, demand for and viability of this community rail initiative can be demonstrated and developed further. Balancing the extent of community, rail and commercial space requirement and capital cost with operational management, costs and revenues over the longer term, will build upon this initial scheme. This will inform a brief for subsequent adaptations, extension or replacement of the existing building, which may be subject of further applications in due course.
- 9.8. Approval under the Building Regulations will also be required, alongside an energy assessment. Wiltshire Council will provide an EPC with a rating of at least E.

10. Surface water and Drainage.

- 10.1. The proposal makes no change to existing surface water and foul water disposal. The existing catch pits will be retained adjacent to the building, and the existing foul drainage from the retained building will be retained, although there will be some re-arrangement of the facilities internally to create a WC suitable for wheelchair users.

11. Accessibility.

- 11.1. The proposal improves the general accessibility of Melksham Station to the wider community. The increase and consolidation of parking provision enables the existing spaces adjacent to the station to be converted to a larger number of disabled parking spaces as set out in more detail in the sections above. Whilst this does not form part of this application as such, this is part of ongoing discussions over the improvement of station facilities with Network Rail and Wiltshire Council.

12. Summary

- 12.1. The work undertaken to date has contributed to the development of an understanding of the possibilities that exist for expansion of the use of Melksham Station and improvements to access, public realm and facilities. This proposal takes the first step to enhancing the facilities and building upon and supporting the increasing passenger numbers and enhanced service to contribute increasing alternative and sustainable modes of transport for Melksham and the wider area.
- 12.2. In particular, the process of undertaking this work, and the consultations and discussions with stakeholders has investigated the effective and efficient use of the former Reeds site to contribute to parking and community facilities at Melksham Station to support its growth and the corresponding growth in passenger numbers on the Transwilt railway.