

Date of Meeting	16 February 2016
Application Number	16/11287/FUL
Site Address	The Stables, High Street, Avebury, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 1RF
Proposal	Use of part of building as book sales/exchange store and visitor information centre
Applicant	The National Trust
Town/Parish Council	AVEBURY
Electoral Division	WEST SELKLEY – Councillor Milton
Grid Ref	410160 169956
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Jennifer Allen

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application has been brought before the committee at the request of the Division Member, Councillor Milton for the following reasons:

- Environmental or highway impact
- Car parking
- Lack of toilet facilities

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that the application be approved.

2. Report Summary

The main issues to consider are:

- Principle of change of use
- Impact on heritage assets
- Parking implications/highway safety impact

3. Site Description

The building to which the application relates is located off the village car park, which is used by the residents of Avebury. The building is single storey with a pitched roof and runs along the eastern boundary of the car park. The building is only partially in use at present (as an outreach post office); it is the empty part of the building which is the subject of this

application. To the rear of the site, there is a residential property with other residential properties on the other side of the car park and the village shops opposite the entrance to the car park. The site is located within the World Heritage Site of Avebury and Stonehenge and within the ring of stones around the village of Avebury. The site is also situated within the Avebury Conservation Area and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The building to the rear of the site (The Lodge) is grade II listed.

4. Planning History

K/77/0262 - Change of use from agricultural to folk life centre, associated catering facilities, toilets, National Trust Information Centre and shop. Approve with conditions – July 1977.

K/16496 – Use as visitors centre. Approved – October 1990.

5. The Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the currently vacant part of the building to a voluntary book sales/exchange and a visitors information centre. There are no physical alterations proposed as part of this application.

6. Local Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2012 namely
Section 4 Promoting Sustainable Transport
Section 7 Requiring good design
Section 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015
Core Policy 57 Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
Core policy 51 Landscaping
Core Policy 58 Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment
Core Policy 59 Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site

From the point of view of the historic environment a primary consideration is the duty placed on the Council under sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

From the point of view of the historic environment a primary consideration is the duty placed on the Council under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area.

7. Summary of consultation responses

Avebury Parish Council

Objects for the following reasons:

- Access to The Stables is directly off High street car park which is used by villagers and the disabled. It is often oversubscribed by users of the post office, shops etc. and is frequently used in an unauthorised manner. An A1 use will increase parking pressures which will grow if the shop is intensified. This could lead to the displacement of vehicles onto High Street, especially during busy times. This would

have a detrimental impact on residents, locals and others in the village. The dangers of additional traffic will apply to many visitors who tend to wander into the road. The entrance to the building fronts onto the car park. Increased risks will arise from conflicting movements of shoppers and car users.

- There is no 'Plan B' for the building. An unrestricted A1 use on a more intensive scale would be contrary to the aims of the World Heritage Site Management Plan which seeks to discourage visitors away from the Henge.
- A shop is not needed as there are already 4 retail outlets in Avebury. Tickets etc. can be bought from other establishments.
- There is a lack of toilets for the visitor centre
- Advertising and signage could have an adverse impact
- It is difficult to judge the impact of the recently permitted Coach House café on the High Street
- There has been a lack of consultation on the proposals
- There is already an existing mobile visitor information facility
- A book exchange is already offered at the community shop

The parish council has suggested the following in connection with the scheme:

- Parking in the adjacent car park to be discouraged
- Provision of toilets
- A restriction on signage
- National Trust to patrol/monitor car parking
- Only low key uses of the building to be allowed eg. D1

Highways Officer

No objection.

World Heritage Officer

Support subject to conditions. There should be no additional signage which would encourage visitors to turn into the High Street to visit The Stables; other signage should be kept to a minimum; and information on the World Heritage Site should be made available at the visitor centre.

Historic England

The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's specialist conservation advice.

Conservation Officer

The proposals are not considered to have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and therefore no particular comments is made on the application from a conservation point of view as it is not considered to cause harm to the designated heritage asset. If anything, giving an active use to a currently redundant site has to be a positive for the area and the longer term interests of the building's state of repair.

Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service have made general comments from a fire safety perspective.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice/press notice /neighbour notification.

No third party representations have been received.

9. Planning Considerations

Principle of change of use

The proposed change of use would result in a currently partially empty building being brought into a viable use within the village centre. It would also complement the existing post office use in part of the building. There are other A1 shops in the location and accordingly it is considered that the proposed book sales/exchange and visitors welcome information outlet would therefore enhance the vitality and viability of the village, as well as having tourism benefits. The proposed use is low key – it is therefore recommended that a condition is imposed restricting the use to that applied for. Any alternative use (including within Class A1) would therefore need planning permission.

Impact on heritage assets

The proposal does not include any alterations to the building and therefore the proposal would not cause any harm the World Heritage Site. Concerns have been raised regarding the erection of signage. Advertisements are considered under The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 and therefore do not form part of this application. Due to the sensitive nature of the site an informative is proposed advising that consent is only given for the change of use element and not for any advertisements which may require the benefit of advertisement consent.

The lack of external alterations would also mean that the proposal would cause no harm to the setting of the nearby listed building or the character and appearance of the conservation area, as it would not change the appearance of the building or the car park.

Parking implications/highway safety impact

Concerns have been raised regarding the potential parking and highway safety implications of visitors to Avebury parking in the 'residents only' car park next to the site. The National Trust has signage around the village directing tourists to its car parks and there is clear signage indicating that the car park next to the site is not for tourists or visitors. Furthermore, there is a large National Trust car park, the users of which are likely to be those using the proposed facility. In addition, the low-key, small scale nature of the proposed use is such that it would not require its own allocated parking.

On the issue of highway safety, the NPPF requires the cumulative impacts of developments to be 'severe' in order to justify a refusal of planning permission. It is not considered that this would be the case here given the small-scale nature of the proposal and the fact that the majority of users of the building would park in the main National Trust car park.

The Council's Highways Officer has raised no objection to the proposal

Other issues

Concerns have been raised regarding the lack of toilet facilities in connection with the proposed visitor information centre and within the wider area generally. Whilst these concerns are acknowledged, a small-scale scheme of this nature cannot be expected to deliver toilet facilities for Avebury as this would be unjustified and unreasonable.

10. Conclusion (The Planning Balance)

It is considered that the proposed use would not cause harm to heritage assets or have significant parking or highway safety implications. Furthermore, any concerns about potential intensification in the future can be dealt with by a condition controlling the nature/extent of the use to that applied for.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be GRANTED for the following reasons:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Application Form, Location Plan and Drawing No. AVE-01 Rev 1 'Proposed Shop'.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 The part of the building to which the application relates shall be used as a voluntary book sales/exchange store and visitors information centre and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Class A1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) (or in any provisions equivalent to that class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

REASON: The proposed use is acceptable but the Local Planning Authority wish to consider any future proposal for a change of use having regard to the circumstances of the case.

- 4 **INFORMATIVE TO APPLICANT:**

The applicant is advised that this permission authorises a change of use only and does not authorise any works or alterations that may require listed building consent/planning permission or the erection of signage which may require advertisement consent.