

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2015
<b>Application Number</b>	14/12107/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Stonehenge Visitor Centre , Amesbury, Wiltshire SP4 7DE
<b>Proposal</b>	Resurfacing of an area of overflow car park
<b>Applicant</b>	English Heritage
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	Winterbourne Stoke
<b>Ward</b>	Till and Wylve Valley
<b>Grid Ref</b>	409985 142854
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Louise Porter

### Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Cllr West has requested the consideration of this planning application at a Planning Committee due to there being considerable local public interest in this application regarding highway issues, and over development within the World Heritage Site. Cllr West has indicated the key issues that justify the call in: Scale of development, visual impact on the surrounding area, design, environmental/highway impact and car parking (use).

#### 1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager (South) that planning permission be **Granted** for the reasons detailed below and subject to conditions.

#### 2. Report Summary

The main issues in the considerations of this application are as follows:

- Principle of Development
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Highway Impact
- Heritage Impact
- Ecological Impact

#### 3. Site Description

The application relates to the Stonehenge Visitor Centre (SHVC) car park which is positioned approximately 2km from the Stonehenge monument, adjacent to the junction between the A360 and B3086. The SHVC and car park is a relatively recent addition to the landscape following the decommissioning of the old visitor centre and car park which was approximately 0.12km from the Stonehenge monument. The existing hard-surfaced car park is positioned to the south-west of the SHVC and contains 361 spaces (including 22 disabled bays and 14 parent and child bays). Adjoining the southern edge of the car park is the existing overflow car park. This contains 133 spaces and is of a re-enforced grass construction.

#### 4. Relevant Planning History

S/2009/1527	Decommissioning of existing visitor facilities and a section of the A344; the erection of a new visitors centre, car park, coach park and ancillary services building; and related highways and landscaping works	Approved with conditions
14/12106/FUL	Change of use from agricultural land and creation (temporary consent 2 years) of a 26 space coach park and associated ancillary works	Under consideration

#### 5. The Proposal

It is proposed to resurface the entire area of overflow car park with a hard surface enabling all-weather use. Visitor numbers have exceeded expectations resulting in the overflow car-park being used much more regularly than anticipated and as a result the temporary re-enforced grass structure is being eroded and leading to access and safety issues. The proposed re-surfacing work will not add any additional parking capacity on the site, i.e. the 133 re-enforced grass parking spaces will be replaced by 133 hard-surfaced parking spaces.

#### 6. Planning Policy

##### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- **Paragraph 137:** “Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably”.

##### Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)

- Core Policy 6: Stonehenge
- Core Policy 51: Landscape
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
- Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment
- Core Policy 59: The Stonehenge World, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site and its setting
- Core Policy 69: Protection of the River Avon SAC Protection of the River Avon SAC

#### 7. Summary of consultation responses

##### Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council

Object. Increase visitor number will result in additional cars using unsuitable local roads to reach and leave the site, plus will result in more vehicle movements within the WHS in general. English Heritage failed to accurately predict visitor numbers

### Highways Agency

No objections. The proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the Strategic Road Network

### English Heritage

The need for the resurfacing of the overflow car park is recognised, with the previous, unsurfaced treatment proving difficult, dangerous and muddy in wet weather. Having reviewed the information supporting the application, we do not consider that the application if consented would have any tangible impact upon either the Stonehenge World Heritage Site or the setting of nearby Scheduled Monuments. Any minor visual impact from the proposed works could be mitigated by the choice of the least intrusive surfacing colour.

### Environment Agency

No objection subject to condition.

Surface water drainage from the carpark is proposed to be directed to ground, via a soakaway, although the application does also state that porous asphalt will be used to surface the car park.

At present the surface is reinforced grass, which means any pollutants arising from vehicles is diffuse across the site. Non-source point minor pollution such as oil drips from vehicles will be adequately dealt with by soil micro-organisms in the place where the pollution falls. However, when car park surface water is collected and discharged to ground in a more concentrated way, e.g. a soakaway, there is a greater chance of contamination of ground water. The soil has less capacity for treating the contaminants.

This issue is particularly pertinent at this location as the visitor centre takes drinking water from their own borehole nearby. We strongly advise that a suitable pollution prevention system is used as part of the surface water drainage for the car park. An oil interceptor may be appropriate provided the site operator has a maintenance plan in operation. We suggest you attach a CONDITION to any approval granted to ensure a pollution prevention method is used in the car park.

### Wiltshire Archaeology

No objections. This area was the subject of archaeological monitoring during the construction of the Visitor Centre. No archaeological features were present in this area. I therefore consider it unlikely that significant below ground archaeological remains would be disturbed by the proposed development.

There are a number of scheduled monuments in the vicinity and the site lies within the Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites World Heritage Site. I would therefore recommend that the advice of English Heritage is sought with regard to the setting issues for these designated heritage assets.

### Wiltshire Ecology

The development affects an area that is already used as car parking and therefore is not likely to cause significant effects on the Salisbury Plain SPA.

### Wiltshire Highways

The proposals submitted are supported in principle by the highway authority, because they will help alleviate potential issues such as those encountered during the 2013/14 Christmas/New Year holiday, when the overflow car park could not reasonably be used.

No additional spaces are proposed, and from an operational point of view the proposals will have no impact on the local highway network.

Whilst not a highways issues, I note from the drawing that the new surfacing interface with existing blacktop area does not provide for an overlapped joint; this should be addressed to ensure a more durable surfacing joint.

There are two issues that should be addressed, and I recommend conditions to deal with them.

Firstly, the proposed contractor's works compound is proposed to be accessed direct from the A360, not via the visitor access road. I do not object to this, but it will need to be controlled as a temporary facility.

Secondly, I could find no reference in the submission to indicate what measures might be taken to ensure adequacy of parking supply during the works, when a substantial number of parking spaces will be lost. There should be a clear understanding of how parking spaces, identified as being needed because of demand exceeding anticipated use (Planning Statement - *1.2.1 Due to high visitation levels, the existing 133 space reinforced grass overflow parking area is being used for everyday parking and considerably more frequently than was originally anticipated, including during wet conditions.*) will be temporarily replaced.

### Wiltshire Landscape

The area is currently being used as an overflow car park so I would not expect any additional landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development because

- a. Cars already park in this area therefore there will be no perceived increase in visual effect in terms of visual clutter (the change of surface will read as an extension of existing)
- b. Construction is minimal building onto existing sub base

## **8. Publicity**

The application was advertised by Site Notice and published on Wiltshire Council's website.

**4 letters supporting the application were received**, covering the following points:

- Wiltshire Police – It is *“important that English Heritage should be able to manage visitor's vehicles on their land rather than causing congestion on surrounding road when they cannot cater for these visitors. The proposed plans go some way to enable English Heritage to manage visitor's vehicles and will minimise the risk of causing congestion”*

- Visit Wiltshire – *“Improving the quality of our visitor experience has been identified as a priority in Wiltshire’s Destination Management & Development Plan, published January 2015. The resurfacing of the overflow car park will help improve visitor flows at peak times, help visitor management all year round and improve the service provided for private tour groups. The proposals will improve the overall visitor experience and would improve the quality of welcome received by visitors arriving in Wiltshire”*
- Royal Artillery Museum – *“The proposed improvements to parking at Stonehenge will improve the quality of experience offered to visitors, whatever time of year. This in turn will help maximise the benefits to local businesses, other visitor attractions and the wider economy from the continued public interest in the nation’s most famous ancient monument”*
- European Cruise Service – *“This is so vital in making a very special place, special once again”*

**13 letters objecting to the application were received**, covering the following points:

- Increase in visitors and cars
- Visitors damaging WHS
- Visitor rubbish
- Congestion
- Increased traffic in nearby villages
- The A303 and Long Barrow roundabout needs to be upgraded/redesigned/replaced
- Existing car park is badly lit
- Existing car park not suitable for people with walking disabilities.
- Light pollution
- Air pollution
- Noise pollution
- “blot on the landscape”
- Car park should be moved nearer the stones
- Making permanent what is currently a temporary overflow on former agricultural land
- Existing car park is unsightly and intrusive
- Need to consider proposal in relation to other application sites e.g. Army rebasing, Wiltshire Grain Store, Royal Artillery Museum, Waste Disposal site at Chittern and Solstice Park.
- Need to better manage visitor number through pre-booking system
- Need to have a traffic management plan
- Stonehenge Traffic Action Group – *“The present vehicle facility for visitors to Stonehenge is already an eyesore”, “The blot on the landscape, that is the SHVC is too far away from the monument and adds to hold ups already on the A303”, “Extra car parking will increase an already exacerbated situation and rat running through Shrewton and other villages”*

- Campaign to Protect Rural England – *“Although more visitors to the WHS is to be encouraged it can only be so if travel to, from and within the WHS is managed in an environmentally sound manner. This proposal would merely see further detriment to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site (contrary to Core Policy 59 of the Adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy and NPPF paragraph 132), as more and more of the open area is taken up with paved surface”.*

**1 letter not objecting but providing comments on the application was received,** covering the following points:

- Building & Monuments Committee, Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Society and Council of British Archaeology – *“provides a prevention of progressive surface erosion during the provision of car parking for the WHS visitors”, “It is suggested that the Planning Authority re-visit the original plan which it is believed included a ‘green transport’ proposal for staff to and from the Visitor Centre. Has this been fully enacted and if not, if this was put in place, would this release additional vital visitor parking spaces to avoid further landscape changes within the UNESCO WHS?”*

## 9. Planning Considerations

### Principle of development

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states “Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably”.

Core Policies 6 and 59 relate specifically to development within World Heritage Sites:

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### **Core Policy 6**

#### **Stonehenge**

*The World Heritage Site and its setting will be protected so as to sustain its Outstanding Universal Value in accordance with Core Policy 59.*

*New visitor facilities will be supported where they:*

- i. Return Stonehenge to a more respectful setting befitting its World Heritage Site status*
  - ii. Include measures to mitigate the negative impacts of the roads*
  - iii. Introduce a greatly enhanced visitor experience in a high quality visitor centre*
  - iv. Implement an environmentally sensitive method of managing visitors to and from Stonehenge*
  - v. Include a tourist information element, which highlights other attractions and facilities on offer in the surrounding area and raises the profile of Wiltshire.*
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## **Core Policy 59**

### ***The Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites World Heritage Site***

*The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Site will be sustained by:*

- i. Giving precedence to the protection of the World Heritage Site and its setting*
  - ii. Development not adversely affecting the World Heritage Site and its attributes of OUV. This includes the physical fabric, character, appearance, setting or views into or out of the World Heritage Site*
  - iii. Seeking opportunities to support and maintain the positive management of the World Heritage Site through development that delivers improved conservation, presentation and interpretation and reduces the negative impacts of roads, traffic and visitor pressure*
  - iv. Requiring developments to demonstrate that full account has been taken of their impact upon the World Heritage Site and its setting. Proposals will need to demonstrate that the development will have no individual, cumulative or consequential adverse effect upon the Site and its OUV. Consideration of opportunities for enhancing the World Heritage Site and sustaining its OUV should also be demonstrated. This will include proposals for climate change mitigation and renewable energy schemes.*
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Therefore the principle of development within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site is acceptable subject to it meeting all the criteria of Core Policies 6 and 59.

### Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed area to be used for permanent car parking is currently a temporary car park which is used frequently. Therefore the Wiltshire Landscape Officer considered there to not be any additional landscape or visual effects arising from the proposed development.

The proposed area of parking is to be positioned immediately adjacent to the existing permanent car parking, containing all the car parking within a confined area to avoid additional separate areas of the landscape being disturbed by cars. In addition this is covering the existing area of temporary car parking, resulting in no additional parking spaces being provided on the site, thus the maximum number of cars on the site at any one time will not change from the existing, resulting in no increase in landscape and visual impact.

One letter of representation has suggested that the car park should be moved nearer to the Stonehenge Monument. This is contrary to the entire aims of the new SHVC which sought to remove unnecessary development around the Stonehenge Monument and move it to a position where it would have lesser visual impact and not a visible part of the landscape when viewed from the Stonehenge monument. The principle of cars being parked within the current application site was agreed by planning permission S/2009/1527.

### Highway Impact

The Highways Agency has concluded that the proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the Strategic Road Network. Wiltshire Highways concluded that the proposal will have no impact on the local highway network.

Wiltshire Highways support the proposal in principle, highlighting that no additional parking spaces are proposed, however following the proposed resurfacing works, the overflow spaces will be useable in all seasons rather than just in fine weather.

Wiltshire Highways comment that the new surfacing interface with the existing blacktop area does not provide for an overlapped joint. As such a condition requiring additional details to be approved by the Local Planning Authority can be imposed to ensure a more durable surfacing joint.

The Site Plan shows a proposed contractor's works compound to be accessed directly from the A360 rather than from the visitor access road. Again, this will need to be controlled via condition, to ensure this is only a temporary access and not to be used by general visitors.

Wiltshire Highways have raised concerns over the lack of information to explain what measures will be taken to ensure adequacy of parking supply during the works, when a considerable number of spaces will be temporarily lost. Wiltshire Highways comment that there should be clear understanding of how parking spaces, identified as being needed because of demand exceeding anticipated use, will be replaced. Again, this can be controlled via condition.

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council, The Campaign to Protect Rural England and a number of members of the public have objected to the proposal regarding the potential impact on the local highway network. These objectors highlight the existing problems with the local road network and raise the concerns that if the existing temporary parking provision is to be replaced with permanent parking, this will result in additional vehicles travelling on the local road network and therefore exacerbating the current problems. As stated above, it is important to note that no additional parking spaces are proposed to those already on the site. This application seeks solely to replace the surface on the temporary parking area, making it more user-friendly and safe to use in all weather conditions. Therefore there is not expected to be a substantially different number of cars using the local road network as a result of the proposed resurfacing works.

Two letters of representation stated that the proposal needs to be considered in relation to other nearby application sites e.g. Army rebasing, Wiltshire Grain Store, Royal Artillery Museum, Waste Disposal site at Chittern and Solstice Park. The Highways Agency and Wiltshire Highways both have no objections to the application considering the proposal to not have a detrimental impact on either the local road network or the strategic road network.

Other letters of representation that have stated that the proposal would result in an increase in litter. As stated above there is not expected to be a substantially different visitor numbers as a result of the proposal, and therefore any issues with litter are not considered to be relevant to this application.

Some objectors have stated that English Heritage need to better manage visitors through the pre-booking system and by having a Traffic Management Plan. As stated above, there is not expected to be a substantially different visitor numbers as a result of the proposal. There is an existing Traffic Management Plan agreed under planning



permission S/2009/1527, however if this is not complied with, this is a matter for Enforcement to look into, rather than being resolved by this current application.

Some letters of representation have stated that no permission should be granted until the A303 has been upgraded and the Long Barrow roundabout being redesigned/replaced. The resurfacing of the overflow car park is not considered to have a direct impact on these areas (as confirmed by Wiltshire Highways and the Highways Agency) and therefore it would not be reasonable to request any works are done to these areas prior to the permission being granted for the resurfacing of the overflow car park.

One letter of objection has raised issues over the suitability of the existing car park for users with walking disabilities. It is unclear whether this comment relates to the existing permanent car park or the existing temporary car park. This application relates solely to the re-surfacing of the temporary car park, which will result in a more user-friendly and smooth surface. However the disabled car parking spaces will remain in place in the existing permanent car park and will not be affected by this proposal.

Another objection letter has stated that the existing car park is badly lit, whilst others have objected based on light pollution. This application can only deal with the current proposal, i.e. the lack of lighting, or light pollution which may exist on the current car park is not relevant to this current application. Lighting is a necessity for a car park on safety grounds, however given that visitors to Stonehenge will only be during hours of daylight, it is not considered that a significant level of light pollution will exist from lighting the proposed area of resurfaced car park, given that lighting will only be required for short periods of time at the end of each day.

Further comments were received regarding air pollution and noise pollution – presumably this is in reference to additional car movements. As stated above, there are not expected to be substantially different visitor numbers as a result of the proposal.

### Heritage Impact

Wiltshire Archaeology have no objections to the proposal. The application site was the subject of archaeological monitoring during the construction of the Visitor Centre. No archaeological features were present in this area. It is therefore considered unlikely that significant below ground archaeological remains would be disturbed by the proposed development. There are a number of scheduled monuments in the vicinity and the site lies within the Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites World Heritage Site. Wiltshire Archaeology recommended that the advice of English Heritage is sought with regard to the setting issues for these designated heritage assets.

English Heritage commented that the proposal would not have any tangible impact upon the Stonehenge World Heritage Site or the setting of nearby Scheduled Monuments. English Heritage consider that any minor visual impacts from the proposed works could be mitigated by the choice of the least intrusive surfacing colour. The Planning Statement confirms that the car park surface will match the

appearance of the existing permanent car park and this is considered appropriate to create a uniform appearance for the site.

### Ecological Impact

The Environment Agency have highlighted the specific issue of pollutants, from vehicles, entering the ground, which is particularly pertinent given that water is extracted from the nearby borehole for use within the SHVC. As such the Environment Agency has requested a condition be imposed to ensure a pollution prevention method is used in the car park. On further correspondence with the EA, it was concluded that this condition was not required as a soakaway is not proposed as part of the application. A porous surface is proposed for the car park which will result in any pollutants entering the ground in a less concentrated way than with a soakaway. This lower concentration is at a level that the natural processes within the soil can adequately deal with.

In terms of other ecological issues, the Wiltshire Ecologist has commented that given the application site is already used for car parking, the proposed resurfacing works are not likely to cause significant effects on the Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area.

### Misc

An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Request was submitted for the proposal prior to submitting the planning application. It was concluded that whilst the proposed development was categorised as Schedule 2 Development, the proposal was not likely to have significant environment impacts and as such an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required.

## **10. Conclusion**

The resurfacing of the existing overflow car park is considered to be acceptable by nature of its limited impacts on highways, heritage, ecology, and landscape and visual impact. As such the proposal is considered to be in accordance with paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Core Policies 6, 51, 57, 58, 59 and 69 of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy.

### **RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions**

- 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:

61034252-DR-C-002 Rev P01 dated 22/12/14 received 23/12/14  
61034252-DR-C-003 Rev P01 dated 22/12/14 received 23/12/14  
61034252-DR-C-511 Rev P01 dated 22/12/14 received 23/12/14  
61034252-DR-C-512 Rev P01 dated 22/12/14 received 23/12/14  
61034252-DR-C-513 Rev P02 dated 05/01/15 received 08/01/15

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

- 3 Prior to the commencement of the development a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CTMP shall include details of the arrangements for the proposed verge crossing, fencing and gating of the proposed compound at the A360 frontage, turning arrangements within the site to ensure no reversing of movements onto the highway, the nature of the temporary arrangements to reinforce the verge at the vehicle crossing point, the reinstatement, and its timing, of the verge crossing upon completion of the works, and measures to ensure that vehicles do not drag mud and other detritus from the site onto the highway. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

- 4 Prior to the commencement of the development details for temporary parking of cars and other vehicles displaced from the development area during the course of the works shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure an adequate supply of parking at the Stonehenge Visitor Centre site during the works.

- 5 Prior to the commencement of development details of the surface interface connection between the resurfaced overflow car park and the existing permanent car park shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of safety