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| Date of Meeting | 23 rd July 2015 |
| Application Number | 15/05558/FUL |
| Site Address | Stonehenge Visitor Centre Amesbury Wiltshire SP4 7DE |
| Proposal | Resurfacing of an area of overflow car park and landscaping works |
| Applicant | English Heritage |
| Town/Parish Council | Winterbourne Stoke |
| Ward | Till And Wylve Valley |
| Grid Ref | 409985 142854 |
| Type of application | Full Planning |
| Case Officer | Louise Porter |

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The Local Member Cllr Ian West has requested the consideration of this planning application at a Planning Committee due to this application being a resubmission of a very similar proposal that was refused by the Planning Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission be **APPROVED** for the reasons detailed below.

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

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| 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 | Approved with conditions |
| 14/12107/FUL | Resurfacing of an area of overflow car park <i>Reason for refusal: "The surfacing of the overflow car park by reason of it's appearance and lack of landscaping would be a prominent and intrusive addition to the World Heritage Site detracting from it's open and undeveloped character, contrary to Core Policies 6 and 59 of adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy."</i> | Refused |

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.

The differences between this current proposal and the previously refused proposal (14/12107/FUL) is that the current proposal has a slightly larger site area allowing for landscaping strips to be included between the rows of car parking.

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

None received at time of writing

[Comments on previous application are as follows: 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 England

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

Historic England

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 cause harm to either the Stonehenge World Heritage Site or the setting of nearby Scheduled Monuments. The low-key landscaping proposals included as part of the application will help to mitigate any minor visual intrusion that may arise from these limited works.

Environment Agency

None received at time of writing

[Comments on previous application are as follows: 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

None received at time of writing

[Comments on previous application are as follows: 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

None received at time of writing

[Comments on previous application are as follows: 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

None received at time of writing

[Comments on previous application are as follows: 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.

No letters of representation were received at the time of writing this report.

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:

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.*

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.*

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. Whilst no formal comments have been received from the Wiltshire Landscape Officer on this current application, on the previous application the 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.

The previous application was refused partly due to its lack of landscaping (although with no objection from the Wiltshire Landscape Officer). The proposed landscaping strips match those elsewhere in the main area of car parking and therefore this is considered appropriate.

Highway Impact

Highways England have 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.

Whilst no representation letters have been received at the time of writing this report, on the previous application a number of objections were received regarding the potential impact on the local highway network. These objectors highlighted the existing problems with the local road network and raised 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. 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.

Heritage Impact

Wiltshire Archaeology had not commented at the time of this report being written, however on the previous application they 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.

Historic England commented that the proposal would not have any tangible impact upon the Stonehenge World Heritage Site or the setting of nearby Scheduled Monuments. Historic England 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 had not commented at the time of this report being written, however on the previous application they 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 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 commented on the previous application 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. At the time of writing this report, no comments had been received from the Wiltshire Ecologist.

Misc

An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Request was submitted for the proposal prior to submitting the planning application, however as a result of consultee responses being required this has yet to be decided. However, the EIA screening request on the very similar previous application 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: Approve with 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:

Application form dated 08/06/15 received 08/06/15
Planning Statement received 08/06/15
61034252-DR-C-002 Rev T03 dated 04/06/15 received 08/06/15
61034252-DR-C-003 Rev T04 dated 04/06/15 received 08/06/15
61034252-DR-C-511 Rev T03 dated 28/05/15 received 08/06/15
61034252-DR-C-512 Rev T02 dated 28/05/15 received 08/06/15
61034252-DR-C-513 Rev T02 dated 22/05/15 received 08/06/15
HED.1152.102 Rev A dated May 15 received 08/06/15
HED.1152.103 Rev A dated May 15 received 08/06/15
HED.1152.104 Rev A dated May 15 received 12/06/15

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