

CABINET
15 JULY 2009

STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009

Executive Summary

This report informs Cabinet of the 2009 Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan, explains its role in the overall planning process and recommends that it be endorsed in order to afford it additional weight in the determination of planning applications.

Proposal

That the Cabinet:

- (i) Notes the preparation of the 2009 Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan.
- (ii) Acknowledges the extensive and thorough consultation process carried out by English Heritage; and
- (iii) Endorses the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan 2009 as supplementary guidance and a material consideration in determining planning applications that affect the Stonehenge WHS, and as a replacement for the 2000 Stonehenge WHS Management Plan previously adopted by Salisbury District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Reason for Proposal

To ensure that there is an up to date detailed planning policy framework which will help guide the decision-making process for the Stonehenge part of the World Heritage Site in the light of changes in the Government's decision on roads and the location of a visitor centre.

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STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009

Purpose of Report

1. To endorse the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan 2009 as supplementary guidance and a material consideration in the planning decision-making process, replacing the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2000 previously adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) by the former Salisbury District Council.

Background

2. World Heritage Sites (WHSs) are of international importance for the conservation of the world's cultural and/or natural heritage identified as possessing Outstanding Universal Value in accordance with criteria set out by the World Heritage Site Committee. Such a designation places an obligation on the UK Government, as a signatory to the 1972 UNESCO Convention, on World Cultural and Natural Heritage, to protect and conserve the site and ensure that its Outstanding Universal Value is appropriately presented and transmitted to future generations.
3. The preparation of a WHS Management Plan fulfils part of this obligation. The Management Plan sets out the long-term strategy for the protection, management and presentation of the site and is prepared with extensive stakeholder consultation.
4. The first Stonehenge WHS Management Plan was produced in 2000 and adopted by Salisbury District Council as SPG in 2000 to inform planning decisions relating to this part of the "Stonehenge, Avebury and associated Sites" World Heritage Site.
5. In December 2007, the Government instructed a review of the 2000 Management Plan following decisions not to fund the A303 improvement dual carriageway tunnel scheme past Stonehenge. This decision meant that the planning consent for a new visitor centre at Stonehenge (Countess East) could not go ahead since planning permission was conditional on the approval of the scheme.
6. The review included consideration of alternative options for the delivery of new visitor facilities at Stonehenge as well as wider environmental improvements. In line with its statutory functions, English Heritage led on the revision of the Management Plan on behalf of the Stonehenge WHS Committee, a Steering Group of stakeholders responsible for its preparation. Wiltshire County Council was a member of this Group.

7. Wiltshire County Council's Cabinet on 21 October 2008 agreed the County Council's response to the proposals within the emerging Management Plan including options for a new visitor centre. Cabinet also resolved that relevant parts of the Plan be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in due course.

Main Considerations for the Council

8. The revised Stonehenge WHS Management Plan was published in January 2009. A copy of the Plan is provided at:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.8675>.

It provides the long-term strategy to manage and protect the Stonehenge part of the WHS, providing a framework for decision-making on the conservation and enhancement of the WHS and maintenance of its Outstanding Universal Value. The priorities, as set out on Page 10 of the revised Plan for 2009 to 2015, are to:

- Maintain and extend permanent grassland to protect buried archaeology from ploughing and provide an appropriate setting for upstanding monuments.
 - Remove woodland and scrub cover from key monuments.
 - Remove or screen inappropriate structures or roads, in particular the A344, and keep the A303 improvements under review.
 - Enhance the visitor experience by providing improved interim facilities by 2012.
 - Improve the interpretation of the WHS and increase access to selected monuments.
 - Continue to encourage sustainable archaeological research and education to improve and transmit the understanding of the WHS.
 - Encourage the sustainable management of the WHS, balancing its needs with those of farming, nature conservation, access, landowners and the local community.
9. The 2009 Plan has been produced by English Heritage in partnership with the Stonehenge WHS Committee, with significant input from the predecessor authorities to Wiltshire Council and taking advantage of increases in knowledge as a result of recent archaeological research. The main differences between the 2000 and 2009 Plans are illustrated in the summary below:
 - New Statement of Significance (pages 25 to 28, 2009 Plan).

- New Attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (pages 28 to 32, 2009 Plan).
- Rewritten Vision that retains the essence of the Vision of the 2000 plan (page 99).
- Detailed 5 year action plan (Part 4).
- New policies on development control and conservation of monuments.
- New sections on education, risks, climate change, monitoring indicators.
- Expanded sections on nature conservation, research, local community, museums.
- Updated maps of ownership, land use, access and grass restoration.
- Key facts and figures about the WHS.
- The central part of the WHS is no longer designated as “core zone”.
- New visitor centre facilities identified as a priority, but there is no requirement for these to be located outside the WHS.

(Source: English Heritage Briefing on the 2009 Stonehenge WHS Management Plan, June 2009)

10. The revised Management Plan updates the 2000 Plan. It sets out a clear framework for the management of the WHS and should be supported by the Council. The Council should also take reasonable steps to ensure that the document has significant status in the decision-making process and that the previous SPG, which is now out of date, is replaced.
11. Government policy (paragraph 6.3, Planning Policy Statement 12, Local Spatial Planning) makes it clear that it is not possible simply to adopt the Management Plan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In this case the Council would have needed to comply with the statutory process for SPD preparation, including undertaking the lead on formal consultations. However, PPS12 also acknowledges that government agencies may produce supplementary guidance that is relevant to the determination of planning applications. Although this would not have the formal status of an SPD, paragraph 6.3 of PPS12 considers that where the document has been through a proper consultation procedure it can serve as a material consideration which can be afforded similar weight to an SPD, particularly if it has been endorsed by the Council to which it is intended to apply.

12. The consultation process undertaken by English Heritage on the draft Management Plan was extensive and thorough, broadly complying with the former Salisbury District Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The process and response is set out in detail in Appendix C of the Plan. In summary, Grayling Global were appointed to carry out the Consultation that included a formal launch and press briefings, public exhibitions locally in Amesbury, Devizes and also London and individual meetings with key stakeholders including Wiltshire County Council.
13. The consultation programme ran from 15 July to 17 October 2008. In total 304 responses were received on the Draft World Heritage Management Plan. There was overwhelming support for the Vision (86%), the Strategic Objectives (84%) and the eight long-term aims of the Plan (81%). Overall, 88% of the responses considered the contents of the Management Plan broadly acceptable. In addition, the detailed response received to the consultation were considered by members of the Advisory Forum and the Management Plan text was redrafted to take account of these.
14. In the light of the extensive consultation process undertaken by English Heritage, the Council is therefore able to endorse the Plan as supplementary guidance without undertaking the lengthy process that SPD requires.
15. The revised Management Plan will provide additional guidance for the implementation of saved Policies T3 and CN24 within the Salisbury District Local Plan (adopted June 2003) replacing the now outdated 2000 WHS Management Plan. These make provision for a new visitor centre to be provided for the Stonehenge WHS (Policy T3) and seek to protect the archaeological landscape of the WHS and the setting of its monuments from adverse development (Policy CN24).

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

16. Alongside the Local Development Framework, the endorsement of the Management Plan would provide the Council with a formal planning policy framework to ensure that negative environmental impacts on the WHS are avoided. The overarching aim of the Plan is to improve the environment of Stonehenge and protect its Outstanding Universal Value.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

17. The implementation of the Management Plan will ensure the Council supports the Government in fulfilling its obligations to carefully protect, manage and present the WHS for the benefit of all, including measures for improving understanding of the site.

Risk Assessment and Options Considered

18. If the Council were to decide not to adopt the Management Plan there is a risk that 'gaps' or inconsistencies in the relationship between the Management Plan and planning policy might lead to challenges to both or either strategy. This in turn could lead to inappropriate development being allowed to the detriment of the WHS.

Financial Implications

19. There are no financial implications for the Council involved in endorsing the Management Plan.

Legal Implications

20. In adopting the 2009 Management Plan as supplementary guidance to Policies T3 and CN24 of the Local Plan, the Council is able to replace the out of date SPG previously adopted by Salisbury in 2000. Up to date policy will be in place to guide decisions on development affecting the Stonehenge part of the WHS.

Conclusion

21. The revised Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2009 provides an up to date, overarching strategic framework for the protection and enhancement of the Stonehenge part of the WHS. An extensive and thorough consultation process has been carried out by English Heritage and the Plan has been prepared with significant contributions from the predecessor authorities to Wiltshire Council. The document is non statutory and should be endorsed by the Council as supplementary guidance that is used in the determination of planning applications that affect the Stonehenge WHS. Endorsement of the Plan will enable the 2000 Stonehenge WHS Management Plan, which is now out of date and previously adopted by the former Salisbury District Council as SPG, to be formally replaced.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None

Appendices:

None