

# WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 1

Date of Meeting	20 January 2010		
Application Number	S/2009/1527		
Site Address	Airman's Corner, Land South East Of the junction of the A360 and A344		
Proposal	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		
Applicant	English Heritage		
Town/Parish Council	1) Winterbourne Stoke (proposed visitor centre) & 2) Amesbury (existing visitor centre)		
Electoral Division		Unitary Members	1) Ian West, 2) Fred Westmoreland.
Grid Ref	1) 409867 142906 2) 412185 142340		
Type of application	Full		
Case Officer	Adam Madge	01722 434380	Adam.Madge@Wiltshire.gov.uk

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application by reason of the importance of the Stonehenge scheduled monument and the surrounding World Heritage Site, both regionally, nationally and worldwide is considered to be a strategic development and is therefore required to be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee.

### Purpose of Report

1. To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be APPROVED subject to conditions and the signing of a s106 legal agreement.

**Members should note that this application is accompanied by an environmental statement as required under schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) England and Wales Regulations 1999 (as amended) paragraph 10 (b).**

### Main Issues

2. The application is seeking permission for –

- 1) The Construction of new visitor facilities, including car and coach parking, on land adjacent to the existing A360/A344/B3086 road junction at Airman's Corner and provision of a Visitor Transit System to transport visitors to the Stonehenge Monument along the route of the current A344 road;
- 2) Construction of a New Roundabout junction at Airman's Corner, including realignment of the B3086 to its original (pre-1964) route where it joins the junction;
- 3) Decommissioning and removal of the Existing Visitor facilities, including car parking, near the Stonehenge Monument leaving an operations facility and emergency toilets.

4) Decommissioning and removal of the A344 road between byway 12 and Stonehenge Bottom.

The movement of the existing Airman's Cross war memorial is also proposed as part of the overall proposals but this is subject to a separate listed buildings application S/2009/1528 LBC

The issues covered in the Environmental impact assessment are as follows:

- Planning Policy Context
- Consideration of alternatives
- Archaeology and the Historic environment
- Landscape character and visual amenity
- Nature conservation and biodiversity
- Noise and Vibration
- Geology and soils
- Water quality, drainage and hydrology
- Air quality and emissions
- Agriculture
- Socio- economic effects
- Recreation
- Conclusion

Other issues considered elsewhere in the planning application include -

- Design of the proposal
- Transport

### **Site Description**

3. The application site is located in two main areas and includes the route between them.

3.1 The site of the new visitor centre is located at Airman's Corner in a field to the SE of the junction which is itself situated to the west of Amesbury and to the east of Winterbourne Stoke and Shrewton. The Stonehenge monument is located to the south east of the proposed site. The main visitor centre and car park is to be located in a field to the south east of the current Airman's Corner crossroads. This field is currently in agricultural use and is traversed by a dry valley which runs north east to south west across the site. It contains a pond close to its western boundary. The site rises more steeply on the southern side than the northern side of the valley.

3.2 The coach park will be located on the opposite side (north) of the existing A344 in an area of land currently occupied by the B3086 which itself is bordered on either side at right angles by a line of mature Beech trees.

3.3 The application site as well as this area for the main visitor centre, coach park and car parking also includes the route of the existing A344 from Airman's Cross to the existing visitor facilities and the facilities themselves which are located opposite the Stonehenge monument just to its North West and on the Northern side of the A344. The site includes the remaining part of the A344 down as far as its junction with the A303 trunk road.

4.

### **Relevant Planning History**

No specific recent planning history associated with the Airman's Cross site, However there have been a number of proposals for new visitors centre facilities to replace the existing one. Most recently this was a proposal to site a visitor facility at Countess East with a land train to the stones. This was submitted in 2004 and resulted in a public inquiry and planning permission being granted in March 2007 subject to conditions.

This permission was tied to the dualing of the A303 in a tunnel past the stones. However this cannot be implemented because the government has decided not to fund the dualing of the A303. and therefore as this was tied into the planning permission this cannot now be implemented.

**5. This planning application is made in full and includes proposals to close and remove part of the A344 between the A303 and Airman's Corner.**

The proposal consists of three separate elements –

- A) The closure and removal of most of the existing visitor centre leaving only a hub
- B) The closure and part removal of the A344 road which runs past Stonehenge.
- C) The development of a new visitor centre, car parking and coach parking at Airman's Corner

5.1. It is proposed to remove most of the existing visitor facilities at the current site including the existing car park. It is intended that a security facility and emergency toilets will be retained. According to the applicants supporting statement this will be approximately 40% of the current footprint of structures (or 4% of the total existing developed area). The hub that remains will be below ground level with a grass roof and timber facade. There will be a visitor transit system drop off and pick up area at the stones.

5.2 It is intended that the A344 between its junction with the A303 at Stonehenge Bottom and Byway 12 will be decommissioned and grassed over with a reinforced grass surface. This will allow for service vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists to continue to use this part of the road. It is intended to formally extinguish this section of road through a separate application to the secretary of state under section 247 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5.3 The remaining section of the A344 will remain as a hard surface although will have vehicular highway rights as a formal road extinguished and will provide the route for a proposed land train between the new visitor centre and the stones.

5.4 The final part of the proposal is the visitor centre building which is to be built to the south east of the existing Airman's Corner staggered crossroads. The visitor centre building will consist of education, learning and interpretation facilities, ticketing, information, café and a souvenir shop. These will be housed in two separate 'cubes' one predominantly from glass and one clad from wood which are joined by an undulating roof form of non reflective sheet metal. The area between the two buildings would be open on two sides. The structure would be single storey and the exterior of the roof would be supported by metal columns

5.5 Also proposed to the east of the main visitor centre is an outdoor interpretation area consisting of several Neolithic huts based on archaeological discoveries at Durrington walls. These are each single storey structures. It is also intended to move the existing Airman's Cross memorial to a position just south of the proposed new visitor centre. (See application S/2009/1528)

5.6 A staff car park and visitor car park which provides 360 car parking spaces with an additional overflow car park to the south is also proposed. An internal access road will connect this from the A344. It is proposed to realign the existing A360/A344/B3086 junction and introduce a roundabout at Airman's Corner adjacent the new visitor facilities.

5.7 The final part of the proposal is to position an ancillary building and coach park to the North East of the proposed new roundabout which will contain the waste and water services, bins, shop storage and staff facilities. The ancillary building will be clad with a wood panelled finish and be single storey in height and of a linear nature. To the north of this behind the existing beech trees is positioned the coach park which will be hard surfaced and cater for 30 coaches. It is proposed to screen the coach park with new trees on three sides.

A land train is proposed to link the new visitor facilities with the Stonehenge monument.

## 6.0 Consultations

**6.1 Forward/Spatial Planning** – Consider that the environmental and economic benefits to be gained, together with the lack of feasible alternatives and the fact that the proposals are in accordance with the requirements of the development plan, there is no planning policy objection to this proposal (see appendix 3).

**6.2 Highways** – No objection subject to the signing of a legal agreement and conditions to cover the following issues.

- A condition requiring the submission of details of the visitor transit system to be submitted.
- A condition requiring drawings to be submitted showing how vehicles accessing the A344 can turn around and exit westbound to be submitted.
- A condition requiring the submission and approval of a scheme for bollards and gating on the A344.
- A scheme to be submitted showing how visitors can be accommodated during exceptional circumstances such as the summer solstice and afforded legal access.
- Details of the pedestrian and cycle route along the whole of the A344 including crossing arrangements at Stonehenge Bottom and a scheme for reviewing such arrangements.

Prior to the opening of the visitor centre

- A scheme to upgrade the surface of byway 12 between the A344 and the Sustrans cycle route 45 shall be submitted and carried out by the applicant.
- A scheme and programme for cycle parking and storage provision at the eastern and western end of highway A344 shall be submitted.

The legal agreement to be signed shall cover the following matters

- 1) The construction of a new roundabout at Airmans corner along with lighting drainage and signage.
- 2) A Travel plan
- 3) Road traffic and Highway Orders
- 4) The provision of a tourist information display area within the visitor centre
- 5) Free access to local people to the stones
- 6) Scheme for Movement of the Airmans Cross monument
- 7) A requirement for using the stopped up part of the A344 for pedestrians and cyclists.

Copy of highways response enclosed as appendix 4

**6.3 Environmental Health** – Having reviewed the planning application in full I would like to submit no adverse comments on the application.

**6.4 South Wilts Economic development team** – Stonehenge is a unique visitor attraction with WHS status as such it draws visitors to the south Wiltshire area from the regional, national and international communities. Visitor facilities at the site are limited and consequently the current visitor experience is not as fulfilling as it might be. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy document recognises that some tourist facilities are substandard and in need of improvement and specific reference is made to Stonehenge.

6.4.1 Having reviewed the application information, the key aspects from an economic development standpoint are that the proposal will-

6.4.2 Attract and provide for increase visitor numbers to the area;  
Enhance the visitor experience thereby encouraging repeat/multiple visits;  
Create potential local employment opportunities during the construction/ implementation stage;  
Create the potential for local businesses and services to be engaged and have input during the construction/implementation stage; and  
Increase the workforce requirements at Stonehenge-thereby creating new local permanent employment opportunities.

The local economic development team in South Wiltshire is supportive of the proposals.

**6.5 Wiltshire Council Archaeology-** The removal of existing facilities and the A344 in particular will significantly improve the setting of Stonehenge, The Avenue and other monuments in the vicinity. However the removal of the A303 should still be a long term aim to complete the improvements.

Agrees with the conclusion of the ES that the benefits of the scheme do outweigh the disbenefits. Considers the new facilities on the whole have been designed in a way to minimise their impact on the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Site (WHS).

6.5.1 Suggest that a condition is imposed to secure a written programme of archaeological work.

6.5.2 Although the scheme has been designed to minimise adverse impacts on the attributes of OUV there will be some adverse visual impact on some key monument groups within the WHS in particular the Greater Curses and barrows, the lesser Curses and barrows and the barrows on the north side of the Winterbourne Stoke group.

6.5.3 The visual impact on the above monuments of what is a substantial structure needs to be mitigated further. The landscape setting and landscape strategy could be modified to reduce the impact of the new building. The potential impact on the setting of key monuments of proposed street lighting in the new car park and at the Long Barrow roundabout and at Airman's Corner needs careful consideration and mitigation.

## **6.6 Wiltshire Council design forum**

6.6.1 The forum met on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2009. The panel felt that most of the comments it had previously made had been addressed. Whilst the design concept was similar to the pre application scheme, the random positioning of the columns made it look slightly less formal which was felt to be an improvement. The columns seemed to be more like a forest of trees which would give it a more elemental feel

6.6.2 Concern was expressed regarding the potential durability and longevity of the painted steel columns. The forum felt that the materials and finish for the columns was so critical to the design it deserved more consideration.

Design of ancillary buildings is also important.

6.6.3 In general the forum felt that much more thought had been put into the design since they had last seen it in July. The forum felt that the architects should be congratulated for the effort that they have put in a relatively short period of time and for designing a building which was very much of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **6.7 Allington Parish Council- No objections**

**6.8 Amesbury Town Council-** Support, observation that the building design is not in keeping with the landscape.

**6.9 Bulford Parish Council-** The parish council does not support the proposal to site the Stonehenge Visitors Centre at Airman's Cross. The part of the A303 which runs between Longbarrow roundabout and Stonehenge bottom is already severely congested and the additional tourist traffic will exacerbate this.

6.9.1 The A360 provides an alternative route into and out of Salisbury and the obstruction at Airman's Cross will cause motorists to abandon this and revert to the A345. This will increase traffic through Amesbury and cause further problems at the Countess roundabout. This will cause further traffic through Larkhill and Shrewton. Considers any further increase in traffic is likely to make vehicles divert through Bulford village and the initial length of road into Bulford from Folly Bottom is a C class road and this is already a rat run.

6.9.2 Considers that the planning application should be refused at least until the A303 is developed into a dual carriageway throughout its length between the Countess and Long Barrow roundabouts. Also council sees no point in closing the A344 which is a useful route.

**6.10 Chitterne Parish Council-** Consider that locating the visitor centre at Airman's Cross will exacerbate the existing traffic rat running that occurs along the B390. They consider that the

westbound exit must be closed so that traffic from the Stonehenge Visitor Centre (SVC) is directed down to the Longbarrow Roundabout and A303. Traffic from the south can go straight over the new Airman's Cross roundabout or can take a proposed new slip beginning well before the roundabout.

6.10.1 The closure of the A344 will increase the traffic activity at the Longbarrow roundabout. This becomes clogged at peak times and this will not be solved by adding extra lanes on the A303 approaches. The solution may include traffic lights or a flyover.

Signing should be clear for the new visitor centre and also to Bath.

**6.11 Durrington Parish Council** – Support subject to conditions, 1) a number of members of the public requested the existing tunnel is kept open as the view of Stonehenge from the tunnel exit is unique and should be retained.

2) Members of a local motor cycling association requested the byways in the WHS should allow motor cycle use as the closing of the WHS Byways would severely restrict their freedom of movement.

**6.12 Orcheston Parish Council-** Make same initial point as Shrewton parish council (see below). Do not consider that the lanes on the Longbarrow roundabout provide sufficient capacity to meet the requirements of through traffic on the A303, visitors heading towards the visitors centre and local traffic from Amesbury heading towards the Till valley villages.

6.12.1 Similar comments as Shrewton Parish Council are made in respect to Airman's Cross and Rollestone crossroads.

6.12.2 Elston lane will be affected and cause danger to users of this lane. Some form of traffic calming needs to be introduced in the lower part of Elston lane and at the Elston lane, Whatcombe Brow junction.

6.12.3 Consider that stopping up a right of way that has been in existence for 5000 years sets a poor precedent for all other rights of way.

**6.13 Shrewton Parish Council- Objects** to the planning application. Around 24600 vehicles use the A303 at present and the congestion at peak periods is already unacceptable and presents a real delay for emergency vehicles coming to incidents along the A360 and for local traffic trying to cross the A303 at Longbarrow. This is projected to increase to around 41,200 by 2027. The projected increase in vehicles rises from 5900 at present to 15600 along this route all of which is compounded by the closure of the A344 and inadequate provision of road management.

The proposals mean that there will be more congestion at the Longbarrow roundabout.

6.13.1 At the proposed Airman's Corner roundabout traffic will have to queue with the SVC visitors until they can turn left off the proposed roundabout at Airman's Cross. There should therefore be a left-hand filter lane built into the proposals.

Considers that Rollestone Crossroads will become much busier as traffic seeks alternative routes.

6.13.2 Whilst the desire to keep the Stonehenge site as clear as possible is recognized, Council objects to the proposal to close byways 11 and 12 to vehicles.

**6.14 Tilshead Parish Council** – Concern is expressed at the probable extra traffic at Longbarrow and Airman's Corner. Traffic already comes to a standstill on the A303 regularly.

6.14.1 The plans show that at Airman's Cross local traffic will have to wait until they can turn off the proposed roundabout. Question whether a filter lane could be built in to the roundabout so that local traffic can move more quickly.

**6.15 Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council-** We are in agreement that a new visitor centre for Stonehenge is needed and long overdue, however, the proposed new visitor centre and access roads are situated in an undeveloped area of open countryside within the WHS. The creation of a new visitor centre and roads across the WHS leading to the car park is unacceptable. Consider that the proposal will not be temporary as has been suggested but will be a long term solution.

6.15.1 The parish council therefore oppose and object to the proposal.

6.15.2 However if minded to approve suggest that where the A360 runs close to the Longbarrow roundabout it should be linked directly to the A360 so that traffic exiting the car park can more easily return to the A303.

6.15.3 The introduction of a roundabout at Airman's Corner is necessary and welcomed but improvements at Longbarrow will make little, if any improvement.

## **STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

**6.16 English Heritage** – Confirm that the applications were subject of pre application discussions. Were considered against the standards we apply in advising on planning applications and are submitted with the corporate support of English Heritage They state that their view is represented in section 5.8.13 of the Environmental Statement which states that –

6.16.1 On balance, taking into account the benefits of the proposed development in sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the Stonehenge WHS, the overall cumulative effect of the scheme would have a large beneficial impact.

**6.17 Environment Agency-** No objection to the proposals subject to conditions regarding water supply, Foul Drainage, Surface Water Drainage and pollution prevention and control.

Second e-mail received 8/01/2010 stating –

*“I would like to confirm the following in respect of the proposed visitor centre at Stonehenge. The Environment Agency’s view is that every effort has been made to make the development as environmentally sensitive as possible from an abstraction viewpoint. All fixtures and fitting are highly water efficient, down to the choice of vacuum toilets over low flush alternatives. Through an analysis of visitor numbers and efficiency of the site, the consultant has identified that any new borehole at the site will be required to provide less than 20M3/d of potable water. This abstraction is therefore outside of the abstraction licence consenting procedure as it is less than the minimum volume which would require licensing, namely over 20M3/d.*

*If one temporarily ignores the fact that this is outside of our control, we believe that in balance, the borehole option is the least environmentally damaging way of supplying water to this site. The site is also a considerable distance from the nearest consented abstraction and therefore no derogation or indeed impact should occur. Talking to our groundwater teams, we believe that the level of change would be undetectable by groundwater loggers, should they be placed in these consented boreholes, and would be masked by logger error.*

*In terms of the Avon SAC, as stated above the scale of this abstraction means that any fluctuation on the Till or other designated water course would be undetectable and therefore would not give rise to any in-combination concerns.”*

*“I hope that this clarifies our position on the abstraction and is of some assistance in the development of the HRA.”*

**6.18 Highways Agency-** The agency supports the application as proposed subject to conditions. The agency makes comments as regards to needing a rights of way strategy that is not included in the transport assessment. The agency also has concerns regarding the form and nature of pedestrian and cycle movements along the former A344 and the impact that this may have on the safe operation of the A303. The conditions that the Agency wish to see imposed cover –

- 1) A rights of way strategy
- 2) Details of the pedestrian/cycle route along the A344 to be submitted.
- 3) Stopping up of A344 and opening of visitor centre to not occur until Longbarrow roundabout modifications have taken place.
- 4) No development to take place until a travel plan has been produced incorporating the outline travel plan.
- 5) Monitoring of the travel plan to take place
- 6) No occupation of the development until a construction management plan has been submitted.

**6.19 Wiltshire Fire and Rescue-** General comments have been made on the need to comply with fire and building regs and that access to the site for the purpose of firefighting is adequate for the size of the development. Also consideration is to be given to ensuring adequate water supplies are available at the site.

**6.20 Ministry of Defence-** Confirm that the MOD has no safeguarding objections to the proposal.

**6.21 Natural England –** (Initial letters) Natural England expects high standards of site restoration around the stones and in many respects application has achieved this. The landscape around the stones will be significantly improved by the removal of the existing visitor facilities. Consider that thought should be given to alternative materials for pedestrian access as artificial green finishes can look very artificial.

Welcome the logical selection to site planning and site selection. Consider that the Coach park, car park and access road fit well with the landscape context. Not so sure about the building as its canopy increases its perceived height. A model of the building to scale in the context of the landscape would assist in these judgements. Consider building does not relate strongly to the landscape. Proposed design appears to relate to a more benign climate than can be expected in the vicinity of Salisbury Plain. The paved areas to the building are very rectilinear as opposed to the more organic nature of paths proposed elsewhere. A more organic natural character could be reinforced by the use of some selective scrub vegetation planting in the vicinity of the building and the car park. With regard to visitor centre building, were other design options use of sustainable green materials considered?

Planting adjacent the coach park should be carried out so that it is sympathetic with the landscape. Support the concept of producing a detailed landscape management plan.

Proposals for decommissioning of the existing visitor centre car park have been well designed and will make a tremendous benefit to the landscape around and the setting of the stones at Stonehenge. Consider it would be better to remove the existing tarmac surface on the former A344 rather than just topping with topsoil.

Consider that lighting should be considered in detail and before determination of the application.

A construction and environmental management plan should be agreed in advance Further information is required from the draft Construction Management statement this information will be required before a planning decision can be made.

Ecological Monitoring and Management plan (EMMP) support the production of this document if planning approval is given this should be subject to implementation of the plans.

Support the proposed visitor management strategy. Should be secured through legally enforceable condition.

Welcome the use of SUDS system for drainage and other measures to prevent water pollution and to minimise water consumption. Natural England agrees with the measures that should be taken in regard to lighting.

Consider that there should be no likely significant effect on the SAC/SPA providing mitigation measures set out in the ES are followed. Details of the required mitigation measures should be agreed as part of the integrated visitor management strategy.

Consider that the information in the ES is however currently insufficient to fully assess the likely significance on the River Till and lists further information required.

(second letters)

Natural England agrees with the conclusions of the HRA and Appropriate Assessment and is now satisfied that under Regulation 48(3) of the Habitats Regulations 1994, the development either alone, or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on the important interest features of the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC), or any of the features of special scientific interest of the River Avon System Site of Special Scientific Interest. We can therefore remove our objections to the application with regard to the River Avon SAC.

Following a meeting with the applicants agents where the various issues we raised were clarified and following consultation with the environment agency we withdraw our holding objection. Natural England have no objection to the proposals subject to the inclusion of suitably worded legally enforceable planning conditions or management agreements to ensure that the proposed final mitigation measures are implemented as suggested in our previous response, clarified in the CBA response dated 18 December 2009.

**Members should note that UNESCO was consulted on this planning application but no response was received.**

## **NON STATUTORY RESPONSES**

**6.22 The National Trust-** Consider the most critical issues to be the World Heritage Site and special landscape area designations and interpretation of policies relating to them.

6.22.1 Consider one of the biggest issues to be whether the proposed building and parking is in keeping with the world heritage site. Arguably as the building situated on edge of WHS and not visible from the stones impact is minimal although inevitably there will be impact on the Cursus.

6.22.2 The trust takes the view that, while any building in the area with associated parking etc, will have some visual impact, the OUV of the WHS is not significantly compromised as a result of the proposals and the chosen site is better than any of the other available options. Consider the net benefit to be strongly positive, taking into account the improvements at the Stones themselves and improved visitor experience which more than offset the landscape losses that come with new visitor facilities.

6.22.3 There remain areas of uncertainty in the current application with regard to how elements of the scheme will operate. The trust considers these important matters that are confident will be resolved in discussion with English Heritage

6.22.4 The Trust is not raising an objection to planning application number S/2009/1527 which it strongly supports.

**6.23 The South West RDA- (Regional development agency)** The proposals will ensure an improved visitor experience at Stonehenge. They are likely to increase visitor spend and dwell time at the attraction and at tourist locations across Wiltshire and the South West. This will help to support the tourism section of the economy and will result in an increased number of direct, indirect and induced jobs.

6.23.1 Makes the point that tourism is worth over 9 billion a year to the local economy, (South West) employing more than 250,000 people and attracting over 26,000,000 visitors a year. A replacement

visitor centre that surpasses the offer of the current facility, has the potential to encourage visitors to spend more time there and to integrate their trips with visits to other parts of Wiltshire and the South West is considered an improvement.

6.23.2 Also support the decommissioning of the existing visitor facility and the A344 highway where it borders Stonehenge. Landscape reinstatement will play an important role in enhancing the setting of, and visitor experience at the world heritage site.

6.23.3 Various other comments are made with regard to the tourism potential of the proposed new facilities.

**6.24 South Wiltshire Economic Partnership (SWEP)-** It is a fundamental objective of the SWEP strategy to support the creation of a world class visitors centre at Stonehenge in order to attract inward investment into the local community. Any concerns we have are based on the transport strategy however understand there are plans to improve the infrastructure surrounding the development. SWEP also keen to identify opportunities for local businesses to be engaged with the Stonehenge visitors centre in particular the development and construction phase.

**6.25 CABE** – Welcome the renewed efforts to improve visitor facilities for Stonehenge. Whilst recognising the challenge faced by the design team in responding to the sensitivities and constraints of the World Heritage Site, we have concerns about both the strategic and detailed approach to both landscape and architecture which we feel need to be addressed before planning permission is granted.

6.25.1 Support the strategic moves to cut short the A344 and de-clutter the site, locate visitor centre and car park south of the A344 and to separate the coach park and supporting building from the visitor facilities. However would like to see evidence of a landscape approach to integrate buildings, parking and visitor access at strategic and detailed level. Consider arrival sequence should be considered as part of whole visitor experience of landscape eventually leading to stones. Consider that there should be a logical sequence to the placing of the buildings in the landscape. Would like to see a more integrated approach to this.

6.25.2 Support principle of arranging visitor centre accommodation into two simple boxes united by a simple canopy roof However consider analogy of forest is not particularly strong. Consider that the random arrangement of columns and the way that they meet the thin edge of the roof canopy will fall short of the robust integrity that would be expected of a building like this. Appealing aspect of the proposal is the delicacy of canopy roof. However concerned that the demands of supporting a paper thin canopy on slender columns in an exposed environment will require a highly engineered solution that may compromise the visually delicate structure. Question whether the roof will tend to channel wind and rain under it rather than offer the level of protection visitors expect. Consider this should be further tested.

6.25.3 Need for new visitor facilities is undisputed are glad to see such a thorough proposal for the whole site. Our questions are about the extent to which the scheme fulfils its potential to support and intensify the visitor experience of a visit to the stones. Feel that more work is needed before the critical potential is achieved.

**6.26 ICOMOS- (International Council On Monuments & Sites)-** ICOMOS –UK welcomes the chance to comment on the application which it sees as substantial progress towards providing much needed improved visitor reception arrangements at Stonehenge.

6.26.1 ICOMOS is happy that the A344 is to be closed where it passes the stones some 23 years after initial assurances were given that this would be the case.

6.26.2 Consider the scheme must provide substantial cultural as well as environmental benefits. At present the scheme is said to have cultural disbenefits, as it impacts adversely on the Outstanding Universal Value but that these are said to be outweighed by benefits for visitors. Do not consider that such disbenefits are acceptable and moreover do not consider they are necessary if the scheme is modified.

6.26.3 ICOMOS considers that a major intervention within the WHS largely funded by public funds, should contribute major cultural and environmental benefits. Consider that the proposed VC should deliver cultural benefits related to major landscape improvements in relation to the monumental and visual attributes of the WHS, to major access benefits for visitors to the wider landscape and to better visitor management. Also consider it is essential it does not cause disbenefits in terms of adverse impact on the attributes of OUV.

6.26.4 Consider the first benefit can only be achieved with considerable modifications to overall design of the building, car park and screening; in essence a down grading of the scheme so that it is lower key and sits well in the landscape and does not impact adversely on the attributes of OUV. The second and third benefits need to be achieved through the way the centre operates in terms of it being more than a service provider. The disbenefits can be removed by changes to design and landscaping.

6.26.5 Consider that with early consultations the adverse impacts on OUV of the proposed visitor centre could have been avoided. Also consider that an overall access strategy that relates the proposed visitor centre to enhanced access and understanding of the whole WHS should now be developed.

6.26.6 Consider it essential that the landscape proposals for all three elements of the site- visitor centre, car and coach parks should be inter related and related to a landscape Strategy, which should now be developed.

6.26.7 ICOMOS - uk supports the concept of a Visitor Centre being sited at Airman's Corner subject to modifications to its design and landscape arrangements.

6.26.8 Consider that the current designs for the proposed building, car park and roundabout will impact adversely on the attributes of OUV. Consider that these adverse impacts could be avoided by changes to the design of the proposed centre, car and coach parks and roundabout. These changes would limit the height of the building, the light spill from it, screening of the visitor centre and car park and lighting on the roundabout.

6.26.9 Consider current building is unsuited to the landscape and creates a disturbing interception of the gentle valley. Consider the two buildings should be roofed separately and reflect the idiom of farm buildings sitting low in the landscape. Consider the height of the building should be reduced so that it does not impinge on views of the Curses or on views from the major visual axis between the northern Winterbourne Barrows group and the henge site south of the curses and on views between the northern Winterbourne barrows and the lesser curses and barrows. Also the colour should be amended to ensure it is not light or reflective.

6.26.10 Considers that the side to the car park could be permeable and with limited light spill but side facing stones should be as blank as possible with no light spill as should the two other sides. Also consider that the building should be surrounded by chalkland shrubs and small trees. Do not wish to see the landscape polluted by light spillage.

6.26.11 Consider that the screening for all areas should be merged to create a low thicket typical of chalk downland.

6.26.12 Also consider that the remaining part of the A344 should be narrowed to allow grass to grow at edges and that white lines and signage should be removed. The surface should be coated with a gravel coated resin.

6.26.13 Consider the ground around the hub should be relandscaped so that the perimeter fence is not seen from the Avenue.

6.26.14 Consider an access strategy should be developed which includes links with local museums, other tourist attractions, transport providers and the national trust.

6.26.15 Icomos Uk asks the planning committee not to approve the current application and to request the applicants to make modifications to the scheme in order to mitigate its adverse impacts and deliver an exemplary approach.

**6.27 The Stonehenge Alliance** – Broadly welcome the proposals to improve the surroundings around the stones including the closure of the A344/A303 junction however considers Airman's corner is not an appropriate site for proposed visitor facilities and therefore object to the proposals. Applicants consider it would have an adverse effect on the OUV of the World Heritage Site. Considers that the scheme departs from planning policy and guidance including the World Heritage Site Management Plan policies 1c and 1e also quotes paragraph 14.5.26 which states that the location and design of any visitors facilities including car parking areas should ensure that they avoid adverse impact on the WHS, its setting and the attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value as well as various other paragraphs.

6.27.1 Also considers that it departs from Policy CN24 and CN20 of Salisbury District local plan, Policy HE1 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan, Govt circular 07/2009 in particular paragraph 8 and 10 which outline that the Outstanding Universal Value of a WHS indicates its importance as a key material consideration, that planning authorities must have regard to and that the main objective should be protection of each WHS through conservation and preservation of its OUV

6.27.2 Considers that the proposal is in conflict with various policies including -The World Heritage Convention Article 4, Unesco guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2008) Guidelines 8,49,96,97,98,99,108,109,112 and 119. CLG Circular 07/2009 on the protection of World Heritage Sites (various paragraphs) Planning policy Statement 1, PPG16 Archaeology and planning (various paragraphs, Regional planning guidance 10 policy EN3, Good practice guide on planning for tourism, Delivering a sustainable transport system supported by local transport plan 3 guidance. Also consider there is a conflict with the European Convention on the protection of the Archaeological Heritage

6.27.3 They consider that it is clear from the planning framework including the management plan that improvements to one part of the WHS cannot be offset by damage to another part. New facilities for visitors ought to be located and designed in such a way as to not compromise the special qualities for the site.

6.27.4 Considers the scheme is directly in conflict with the WHS and OUV Considers there is an overwhelming case for advertising the scheme as a departure from planning policy. Consider that the application should be called in for a public enquiry because of this.

6.27.5 Points out that the impact on archaeology is just as important in considering the impact on the attributes of the OUV that make up the world heritage site. Considers that the groundwork's for the site would leave an imprint on the ground in archaeological terms where there is none at present. Which in their opinion means the structure would be neither sustainable nor truly reversible.

6.26.6 Considers the siting of the building so far away from other built form means that the visitor centre will not be sustainable.

6.27.7 Considers the application lacks information in respect of the position of lighting columns at Longbarrow and Airman's Corner

6.27.8 Positions of exterior lighting at the visitor centre building, the walkways, the car and coach park, and at the hub at Stonehenge are not marked.

6.27.9 Considers that photomontages of the scheme give a complex and misleading impression of the impact of parked vehicles.

6.27.10 Query what elements are missing from the scheme as per paragraph 4.5 of the D and A

6.27.11 Not clear whether a bore hole will be a viable option or not if a pipeline is required for water to the new visitor centre it is queried where this will go and how this will affect the archaeology in the area.

6.27.12 Note that aspects of surface and waste water drainage are still subject to EAs approval.

6.27.13 No appropriate assessment with the application documents. Consider this should be submitted as part of the application.

6.27.14 Consider that the pedestrian route along the A344 should have some form of protection to protect pedestrians from the land train.

6.27.15 Wonder whether sufficient space has been allowed for the visitor-transit vehicles to turn.

6.27.16 Considers that a green travel plan should have been submitted which should also address the lack of adequate provision for cyclists and walkers including safe A303 crossing points.

6.27.17 Consider that they should have been given more time to consider the proposal.

### **6.28 CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England Wiltshire Branch)**

6.28.1 Considers that the application is a departure from the safeguards put in place for the WHS. It is further considered that the size, unnecessarily prominent flagship design and lighting of the proposed visitor-centre, together with the impact of the associated works, including the highly visible car and coach parks, and the improved roundabouts, would be such as to severely damage the OUV of the WHS including the setting of the site and its monuments. Considers the lighting in particular would be insensitive.

6.28.2 Would be prepared to accept the Airman's corner site on a temporary basis providing the building were more sympathetically designed low key and single storey, better screened parking arrangements, coach and overflow parking is removed to another, less visible location such as Greenland farm and there is no highway illumination and reduced other lighting.

6.28.3 Considers information is missing as per the letter above from the Stonehenge alliance. Also considers detail concerning the entrance doorways for the timber faced pod should be submitted. Further information on how much of the hub building may be seen in the wider landscape.

6.28.4 Makes comments regarding appropriate assessment that should be carried out and that further information is required to do so.

Consider either amendments should be made to the scheme or it should be called in for a public enquiry.

**6.29 Wiltshire archaeological and natural history society-** There are a number of aspects to the scheme that we welcome and support including the closure and grassing over of the A344, the removal of visitor facilities and car parking from Stonehenge, The proposal for a new visitor transit route that will not require the construction of new roads, the closure to certain motorised vehicles of byway 12.

6.29.1 They consider the scheme is in conflict with a number of policies in the Unesco operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Site, also in DCLG Circular 07/2009, the district local plan and the WHS management plan.

6.29.2 However they have a number of concerns and make suggestions that they consider will improve the scheme including Additional screening of the VC. Reduction in height of the VC building, minimising the long term impact of the visitor centre by retaining existing slopes and minimising light pollution.

**6.30 COBDO (Council of British Druid Orders)** – Support the closure of the A344 and the movement of the visitor centre to Airman's Corner. However wish to be assured that it will still be possible to walk to the stones free of charge and that there are no fences directly adjacent to the stones. Also wish to see Byway 12 remain to be open to the public at the time of the various solstices.

### **6.31 Council for British Archaeology**

6.31.1 CBA is strongly in support of improvements to the experience of visitors to the Stonehenge WHS it supported the choice of Airman's Corner. However make points regarding archaeology which is acknowledged appears to be relatively limited however asks that further consideration is given to reducing the impact of the main visitor building consider that further consideration is given to the scope for designing the building the building to sit lower in the landscape with less visual impact. Also the impact of the car parking areas, associated lighting and new highway lighting should be considered. Design to reduce the level of lighting and introduce more planting is essential.

6.31.2 The above impacts can be balanced with the undoubted benefits that will be achieved by the closure of the A344, the removal of the unsightly intrusive elements of the current visitor facilities close to the stones and the treatment of the former A344 road to remove the section between Stonehenge Bottom and Byway 12

6.31.3 Considered that the proposals respect the aim that development should be in accordance with principles and best practice for sustainable development and construction. More attention, however, should be given to sustainable travel and access particularly for cyclists and pedestrians not arriving by car

6.31.4 CBA gives it's support to the planning application but considers the above matters should be addressed.

### **6.32 CBA Wessex (council for British Archaeology)**

6.32.1 Similar comments as above but also consider the building does not look temporary nor low key and will be visible from the western end of the Cursus. Therefore believe design should be modified so that it is less prominent and introduce an improved planting scheme. None the less acknowledge that the new proposals represent a significant improvement on the present facilities and therefore do not intend to raise an objection to the planning application.

6.32.2 Also additional matters that should be addressed and could be addressed in a post decision phase. Screening-the landscape strategy should be increased to incorporate more screening into the proposal. Also a travel plan should be introduced. Wish to see more detailed proposals for the transport of passengers. Consider that the retained section of the A344 should be recovered green to prevent visual intrusion. Consider that the redundant portion of the A3444 should be removed in its entirety together with as much of the road foundations as is practicable. Considers that there is no justification for more lighting at the proposed new roundabout at Longbarrow.

**6.33 Corridor Alliance** – Concern is expressed that the planning application creates further traffic growth. Concern is expressed that this creates a large car park in the WHS and an opportunity has been missed to have a modern, pleasant, healthy sustainable and efficient access policy at the site.

6.33.1 Concern is expressed that to add massively to the car parking of an attraction and then to take measures to attempt to persuade motorists not to use it is the wrong approach.

6.33.2 To move the visitor centre further west is to move it further away for those visitors who choose to come by sustainable transport modes (walkers, cyclists) via Salisbury or Grately.

**6.34 Avebury Society-** Considers the application should be advertised as a departure. Concerned that the application is being entertained by English Heritage who have expressed concern over its adverse impact. Considers that local plan policy CN24 which seeks to protect the archaeological landscape has been ignored. Also Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention should be considered. Similarly the government guidance CLG 07/2009 is a material consideration. Whilst agree with the closure of the A344 and removal of existing facilities do not agree with making another 'eyesore' at Airman's corner. Consider the protective framework must not permit this to happen. Object to the scheme in principal and in detail.

**6.35 The Amesbury Society** – Consider that they have not had enough time to comment and therefore have restricted themselves to the bat and breeding bird surveys. Considers that the idea of building a visitor centre on a green field site on chalk, agricultural downland will have a devastating effect on the flora and fauna of the area extending a long way from boundaries of the site. This will also have a devastating effect on the habitat of the birds listed. Considers that bats also are likely to be affected.

**6.36 Sustrans** – Object to the proposal. Support the development of a new visitor centre but consider the stopping up of the A344 at Stonehenge bottom without the provision of a similar or better alternative route does not comply with local plan policy R17. Consider more details should be provided of the surface of this route. Wish to see details of the gating arrangements at either end of the A344 prior to planning approval being granted.

6.36.1 Object to there not being any measures for cyclists to cross the A 344 at this point and consider that crossing the A344 will be more dangerous.

6.36.2 Consider that a detailed travel plan should be developed before planning permission is granted.

6.36.3 Consider that the applicant has failed to comply with parts of PPG13 and policies G1, G2, G9, and TR1. TR12 and TR13 of the saved policies of the adopted local plan. Object therefore on the grounds that the applicants have not provided a detailed travel plan which enables visitors to travel safely to Stonehenge on foot , by bicycle, by mobility scooter or by wheelchair.

**6.37 Hampshire cycling C2C** – Object on similar grounds to Sustrans above. Concerned about the closure of the A344 and the adequacy of a right of way for cyclists at this junction. Consider that any route for cyclists over this bit of the former A344 should be a designated byway. Consider that the proposal will severe access rights into the WHS contrary to policies that bind both Wiltshire council and the highways agency.

6.37.1 Concern is expressed that there is no safe crossing place at Stonehenge bottom and the idea of a tunnel for cyclists under the road is suggested. Concern is also expressed that the Highways agency is blocking the implementation of a central refuge at this point.

6.37.2 Various options for crossing the 303 at the point where it connects with byway 12 are suggested including a tunnel, a bridge and traffic lights all of which could be considered. A 40mph zone could also be introduced. Improvements to other rights of way in the WHS should be made.

6.37.3 Suitable bike parking facilities should be provided at the stones drop off point

### **6.38 Cogs – cycling opportunities group for Salisbury**

6.38.1 Object to the proposal for the following reasons. The surfacing proposed on the grassed over section of the A344 has not been specified. Bridleway or byway status would be appropriate to secure the interests of cyclists. The access gate must be open at all times.

6.38.2 Considers that the issue of accessing Stonehenge bottom from local centres of population has not been considered in the application. Consider that stopping up the A344 will increase traffic flow and therefore danger at Stonehenge Bottom where horseriders and cyclists are most likely to cross. Similarly crossing the A303 at its junction with byway 12 will be an issue. Considers application should be refused until these issues are addressed.

6.38.3 Suggests a controlled crossing of the A303 for pedestrians, cyclists etc. upgrading of the footway from Stonehenge road to a shared use cycle and footway up to Stonehenge Bottom. 40mph limit along this section of the A303. Also suggest an extension of the shared use path to byway 11 and a permissive path joining it to Byway 12 with a controlled crossing or tunnel at the byway 12 junction. A 40mph speed limit between the end of the dual carriageway and Longbarrow roundabout. Wish to see further cycle parking provide as C2c above.

6.38.4 Consider that the outline travel plan submitted with the application is not exemplary and that a new travel plan should be submitted before the planning application is granted.

### **6.39 Campaign for better transport**

6.39.1 Considers Airman's corner to be a poor choice of location as it is within the open landscape considers this to be contrary to a number of policies including policy N24 of the local plan. Also considers as the proposal is further away from Amesbury it conflicts with PPS1. Considers alternative sites such as Solstice Park or the centre of Amesbury should have been considered.

6.39.2 Considers that more local interpretation centres should have been used rather than one large visitor centre. Could be an explorebus link between these and cycling and walking links could be developed.

6.39.3 Considers that there is a failure to put green travel planning at the heart of the application rather it is just an add on. Considers that the applicant has failed to comply with guidance on the production of travel plans by stating that a full travel plan will be implemented when the visitor facility is up and running. Consider that 100% of visitors should arrive by public transport, walking and cycling.

6.39.4 Considers that the siting of the visitor centre 2km away from the existing visitor centre makes it even less accessible than the original centre. It fails to comply with PPG13

6.39.5 Raises the same issues as Cogs, C2C and Sustrans in relation to the crossing of the A303 at Stonehenge bottom and byway 12/A303/ (see above)

6.39.6 Considers the transport assessment to be unsound as it appears to show that there would be capacity problems with the A303 even if no new visitor centre was built therefore the improvements to the Longbarrow roundabout would have taken place anyway. It is not possible from the assessment carried out to evaluate what the contribution of the visitor centre relocation to congestion levels will be.

6.39.7 Support the closure of the A344/A303 junction however consider that the failure to provide a green travel plan are not in accordance with policy 5a of the management plan.

6.39.8 Considers application is a departure from the local plan as it doesn't comply with PPG1, PPG13 Local plan policy TR12, CN24, CN20 and the World heritage site management plan.

6.39.9 Consider an appropriate assessment needs to be undertaken.

6.39.10 Consider it a mistake to try to finish this project by the 2012 Olympics consider that in the short term an exemplary green travel plan should be developed for existing facilities and that the A344 at Stonehenge bottom should be closed. Introduce a speed limit of 40mph in the WHS along the A303 and upgrade the existing visitor facilities within the existing footprint.

**6.40 Wiltshire Wildlife Trust-** Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is happy to support the proposal, it does not deliver as much as a more ambitious scheme to underground the road infrastructure might have done but given the financial constraints this proposal represents a significant step forward.

6.40.1 Pleased with the sustainable and energy efficient design for the visitor centre and the use of chalk grassland seed mixes also welcome the removal of recreational vehicle traffic from the Byways in the area which will add significantly to the tranquility and the opportunities offered to visitors to fully experience the chalk grassland.

**6.41 Berengaria Order of Druids-** Consider that parking would not be adequate at the summer solstice and other Solstices including the winter one. The Drove is currently used for parking and concern is expressed that if this was closed, there would be nowhere for people to park and

particularly those people with disabilities. Concern is expressed that people will not walk or cycle to the stones. What provision for the elderly and disabled is being planned? What first aid facilities will be available at the new site? Queries how the archaeology is to be conserved? How are protected species to be conserved? Will there be any signposts for walking? Will there be any educational facilities for children.

**6.42 Trail Riders Fellowship** – The fellowship lodges a formal objection to the application on the grounds that an order to prevent motorised traffic using the two byways is unnecessary. If this element were withdrawn from the scheme the fellowship would be prepared to withdraw its objection.

## 7. Publicity

7.1 The application was advertised by site notice, press advert and neighbour consultation.

7.2 144 letters of response have been received. The following are responses that differ from comments made above from the groups above..

- Question whether tourists will use such a facility. It is too far from the stones
- Concerned at the proposed TRO and the closure of Byway 12 to vehicular traffic
- Concerned there is no equality and diversity assessment
- No disability impact assessment submitted
- Concerned there is no traffic impact report
- Concern of increased risk to pedestrian, horse, cycle and wheelchair users.
- Concerned the proposal is contrary to various articles of the European convention.
- Proposal should not be rushed through to meet the 2012 Olympics deadline.
- Considered that car park is oversize and an intrusion in the landscape
- Existing visitor centre could be 'redone' at little cost
- The Hub should be less visible than presently shown
- Airman's Cross is open and should remain so
- Light pollution should be mitigated.
- Considers that a site between Durrington Down Farm buildings and the Cursus is the preferred location.
- Colour of visitor centre roof will be intrusive
- Don't consider beech hedge round Coach Park will be effective.
- Promises on duelling the area around Stonehenge have been forgotten
- Visitor centre should be built near the Countess roundabout
- Birds of Prey may be frightened away
- The Green travel plan should be part of the submission of the application
- Concerned about the length of time for consultation.
- Concern expressed about stock fencing around the stones.
- Development will interfere with religious right as a pagan druid to attend ceremonies
- Suggest wind testing of proposed design for vc building be undertaken
- Need to make sure visitor centre does not oscillate in high winds.
- Stonehenge VC should have a planetarium with scale model of Stonehenge
- Consider TRO's are just a further way of commercialising Stonehenge.
- Is the car park big enough for busy periods?
- Consider that vehicles with low CO2 emissions should be used to transport passengers or possibly horse drawn vehicles.
- Consider that the cost of the project is too high
- Consider that new application is an improvement on current facilities.
- Needs to be a safer way to cross the A303 than at present suggest tunnel or bridge
- Consider that current visitor facility represents a significant visual intrusion in the landscape
- Integrated transport white paper requires a reduction in traffic where its environmental damage is worst.
- Considers a non polluting rail link to Stonehenge should be developed.
- Consideration should be given to terrorism and the potential for it at the VC.
- Consideration should be given to the climate change act, 2008, The transport Act 2000, The Energy Act 2008, the Planning Act 2008 and their implications
- VC Is being built in the wrong place resulting in more emissions than if it was built at Countess East.
- VC site worsens carbon dioxide emissions.

## 8. Planning Considerations

8.1 Planning Policy Context

8.1.1 The planning policy context for this report has been set out in appendix five in the planning policy response from the spatial planning department at Wiltshire Council. This sets out clearly the local planning authority's requirement to consider the planning application in accordance with the relevant policies. Spatial planning state -

8.1.2 *"Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires this application to be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Planning System is a plan led one and there must be a rigorous analysis of the proposals to test whether they are in accordance with the development plan. Only then should all other material considerations be taken into account to evaluate the suitability of the proposals.*

8.1.3 *If any application is contrary to policy then they should properly be refused unless other material considerations raise exceptional circumstances that merit setting them aside. Similarly if the application can be demonstrated to comply with policy then this introduces a strong presumption to recommend approval for the proposals unless again that is outweighed by other material planning issues."*

## 8.2 Consideration of the proposal against policy

8.2.1 The documents at appendix 2 are the main material policies and documents that this planning application needs to be judged against. Whilst to write in detail about each of these documents and policies in this report would make the report too lengthy the council has given careful consideration to each of these documents and policies.

### 8.2.2 International policy and guidance –

8.2.3 The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World and Natural Heritage contains the type of natural and cultural sites which are considered for inclusion within the world heritage list. In signing this convention in 1972 Britain pledged to conserve its national heritage and those world heritage sites situated within Britain.

### 8.2.4 The response from the council's spatial planning department considers that –

*"While it may be the case that the proposed solution put forward to solve the problems within this planning application has not met with universal support (see Appendix x, page x, comments of neighbours), from the amount of time, resource and research that has been expended to bring this project to fruition, as well as the extensive documentary evidence supplied to support this application there is no doubt that this application has been formulated to make a significant contribution to the aims of the Management Plan. It has overriding aims of restoring Stonehenge to a more respectful setting, free of obtrusive 20<sup>th</sup> century developments, with improved access, improved interpretation and understanding and encompasses a long-term vision for securing the future existence, enhancement and enjoyment of this iconic site. As such the application unequivocally complies with the obligation the Convention places on the UK."*

8.2.5 In terms of complying with the convention therefore it is considered that this project does so. The aims of the project in terms of removing much of the existing visitor centre and partial removal of the A344 along with the traffic associated with it can certainly be said to comply with international guidance. The introduction of a new visitor centre well away from the existing monument with its improved visitor facilities and interpretation areas further helps the knowledge and understanding of the monument and world heritage site in line with the objectives of the convention.

### 8.2.6 National and regional policy and guidance –

The proposal needs to be tested against national policy as contained within the PPG's and PPS's outlined above and also against the newly published circular 07/2009 (Protection of World heritage sites).

Circular 07/2009 states the following *"The outstanding universal value of a World Heritage Site indicates its importance as a key material consideration to be taken into account by the relevant*

*authorities in determining planning and related applications and by the Secretary of State in determining cases on appeal or following call in. It is therefore essential that policy frameworks at all levels recognise the need to protect the outstanding universal value of World Heritage Sites. The main objective should be the protection of each World Heritage Site through conservation and preservation of its outstanding universal value. “ (Circular 7/2009 P2)*

8.2.7 Outstanding universal value’ means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries.

*“The Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government and for Culture, Media and Sport expect planning authorities to treat relevant policies in management plans as key material considerations in making plans and planning decisions, to take them fully into account when devising core strategies and other development documents, and to give them due weight in their other actions relating to World Heritage Sites.” (Circular 7/2009, P4)*

8.2.8 It is clear from this that the areas that make up the World Heritage Site and its features of Outstanding Universal Value are important to the consideration of this application and to any management plan devised. (see below). The circular emphasizes the need to protect the World Heritage site and for this to be a significant material consideration along with all the other documents and plans referred to above.

8.2.9 In considering whether the proposal complies with national and regional planning guidance the councils spatial planning department has concluded that –

8.2.10 “The planning application is considered, in principle, to comply with national and regional planning guidance. Its design and siting is based on the principle of sustainable development, while there is in landscape terms a significant net benefit of removing inappropriate 20th century clutter from the World Heritage Site. It will undoubtedly bring both direct and indirect benefits to Amesbury and the district. “

8.2.11 In reaching this conclusion and taking into account the relevant planning policies it is concluded that the principle of creating a visitor centre at Airman’s Corner represents the most acceptable solution in terms of maintaining the integrity of the world heritage site.

8.2.12 “Finally, it is important to evaluate whether the application can be considered to enhance the local environment. Whilst the scheme is leading to new development at Airman’s Corner , it is also leading to the removal of both the A344 and the existing facilities immediately adjacent to Stonehenge within the central core of the World Heritage Site. This can only be considered a net gain in environmental terms. The removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century incursion so close to Stonehenge will contribute to returning the Scheduled Ancient Monument to a more respectful setting fitting of its international status and value. Furthermore the design and layout of the facilities are of an extremely high quality and subtle design, which seeks to keep their impact minimal.”

8.2.13 It can be seen from the above that the Councils spatial planning team when analysing the application consider that the removal of the existing facilities and the removal of part of the A344 road past the monument significantly enhance the setting of the Stonehenge monument. They also consider that the applicants have identified there will be some negative effect on the World Heritage site, however the net gain from the proposal would be a significant enhancement of the World Heritage Site as a whole.

8.2.14 It is the officer view that the removal of the A344 and the removal of most of the existing visitor’s facilities and car park will have a significant positive effect on the World Heritage site. The introduction of new visitor facilities alongside this complies with the management plan as can be seen below and it is therefore considered that the proposal complies with both National and regional policies.

8.2.15 Local policy and guidance-

8.2.16 The principal of development has to be considered against two major policies of the local plan these being saved policies C2 and T3

8.2.17 Policy C2 -*“Development in the countryside will be strictly limited and will not be permitted unless it would benefit the local economy and enhance the environment.”*

Policy T3- *“It is proposed that a new visitor centre will be provided for the Stonehenge World Heritage Site.”*

8.2.18 Officers consider that the proposal would comply with policy C2 of the local plan in that a much enhanced visitor centre would benefit the economy as it is likely that visitors would stay longer at the Stonehenge site and spend more locally. There is likely to be spin offs in terms of locally sourced trade and other benefits to tourism in the area. As already stated it is considered that the removal of the old visitor facilities will enhance the environment around Stonehenge and no objections from statutory consultees have been raised as regards the effects of the new visitor centre. It is considered therefore that the proposal complies with this fundamental policy of the local plan.

8.2.19 Policy T3 of the saved policies of the local plan states that a new visitor centre will be provided for the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. This is supported by the Council, as such this application provides such a visitor centre and therefore the application complies with this.

8.2.20 Policy C12 of the Wiltshire and Swindon structure plan has again been considered by the councils spatial planning team and it states

8.2.21 *“Local Planning Authorities will protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from non-agricultural development. Exceptionally, where there is an overriding need for development on best and most versatile agricultural land, which cannot be met elsewhere.”*

8.2.22 In considering this part of the scheme the spatial planning department have stated that –

8.2.23 “The final point of principle is that with the Wiltshire Structure Plan, policy C12, which basically states that the best agricultural land needs to be protected from development. The 'best and most versatile land' is classified as grades 1, 2, and 3. The construction of the new visitor facilities at Airman's Corner will result in the loss of 6.7 ha of agricultural land, which includes 2.7 ha classified as best and most versatile agricultural land (sub-grade 3a). The supporting text with the policy makes it clear that this land should only be developed if there is an overriding need that cannot be met elsewhere. The need for a new visitor centre to serve Stonehenge has long been accepted as an exceptional need as expressed through policy T3 of the Salisbury Local Plan and the setting.

8.2.24 The exceptional need for the new visitor centre being established, it must be examined whether alternative sites are available that would help safeguard the best agricultural land. The detailed analysis of site selection and consideration of alternatives is contained in section 3 of the Environmental Statement. In summary, the preferred options are considered to be an optimal response to the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2009 policies for conserving and enhancing the outstanding universal value of the WHS, while maximizing opportunities for improved understanding and enjoyment for all visitors. The environmental assessment of alternative sites is compelling and taking a view of all land use constraints the Airman's Corner site does emerge in planning terms as the most acceptable site.

8.2.25 The Environmental Statement states - *The Airman's Corner site was selected as the preferred site as it would:*

*-Minimise as far as practicable adverse impact on the WHS, its setting and the attributes of its - Outstanding Universal Value;*

*-Minimise as far as practicable adverse impacts on the character of the landscape;*

*-Avoid constraining opportunities for improvements to the setting of Stonehenge and other - monuments and sites in the WHS landscape as far as practicable;*

*-Make use of land which has been previously disturbed by development – the section of the B3086 to be removed;*

*-Make use of existing infrastructure so enabling new infrastructure (including access roads and transit routes) within the WHS to be kept to a practical minimum.*

8.2.26 Therefore in relation to policy C12 the proposals are considered to accord with its provisions as exceptional need that cannot be elsewhere has been demonstrated.”

8.2.27 It can therefore be concluded that the proposal in relation to the development plan (regional and local policies) accords with the development plan in principle.

8.2.28 In addition to the principal of the development the detail of the development needs to be considered and this is contained within the spatial planning response at appendix 5. It is not intended to reiterate what is said there again at this point as these individual issues will be covered later in this report (see below). None the less officers agree with the views of the spatial planning department that as well as being acceptable in principal the development complies with the detailed requirements of the development plan policies.

8.2.29 Is the proposal a departure from the local development plan?

8.2.30 Representations have been received stating that objectors to the application consider it to be a material departure from the development plan. Officers do not conclude this. In order to be a departure the proposal would have to conflict with one or more policies of the development plan as is shown above and in the spatial planning response it is not considered that the proposal conflicts with the development plan and is not therefore a departure from it.

8.2.31 It should be noted that even if the proposal were a departure, since new legislation which was brought into force on the 20<sup>th</sup> April this year, such applications which are considered as departures do not need to be referred to the secretary of state.

8.2.32 Emerging Regional spatial strategy and South Wiltshire Core strategy

8.2.33 The emerging regional spatial strategy for the south west and the emerging south Wiltshire core strategy are at an advanced stage and include the policies as listed above.

8.2.34 The South Wiltshire Core strategy

8.2.35 The South Wiltshire Core strategy was submitted to the secretary of state in mid November 2009 and includes similar policies to that which are in the existing local plan but also contains policy 13 which states that-

8.2.36 *New Visitor facilities will be permitted where they:*

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

8.2.37 This policy along with the requirements of the emerging RSS have been summarized as follows-

- Infrastructure - New development to be supported by infrastructure
- High quality design - In terms of urban form and sustainability criteria
- Sustainable Construction
- Natural and Historic Environment - To be protected and enhanced. Priority to preservation and enhancement of sites of international or national landscape, geological, archaeological or historic importance.
- Nature conservation - Distinctive habitats and species of South West to be maintained. Protection and enhancement of region's network of ground, surface and coastal waters and associated ecosystems.
- Sustainable tourism and the economy/ Realising the potential of cultural and heritage assets /

- Decentralised energy to supply new development
- Waste - Controlling, re-using and recycling waste in development.

8.2.38 Again these parts of the emerging RSS and local development framework are similar to the existing policies and will be considered in the individual parts of the report.

#### 8.2.39 Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan

8.2.40 As stated above the World Heritage site management plan is an important document in protecting the world heritage sites features of outstanding universal value, the following is the spatial planning response to that document in the context of the current application-

8.2.41 *“The Government has made it clear that the revised Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan provides the framework within which the Project must be implemented. On 15 July 2009 Wiltshire Council’s Cabinet resolved to “endorse 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.” As such, the revised Management Plan 2009 provides the overarching guidance and policy context for the development of the Project.*

*The Project will help deliver the Vision for the WHS that is set out in the revised Management Plan 2009. It will enhance the visitor experience by providing improved New Visitor Facilities and interpretation, which will assist in achieving a number of the revised Management Plan’s aims related to conservation of the WHS, sustainable tourism and visitor management, and sustainable traffic management and transportation.*

*The Management Plan represents the Government’s recognition of this obligation under the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Convention and summarises proposals to prevent damage to Stonehenge and its setting and to ensure its survival for future generations. The Management Plan also goes far beyond the obligation and crystallizes the Government’s vision as originally set out in the Stonehenge Master Plan for the enhancement of the World Heritage Site and Stonehenge.*

*The Management Plan has been prepared following guidelines prepared by the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS): the expert body that advises UNESCO in providing objectives for the future management of the Site. In accordance with ICOMOS guidelines, the Management Plan has been drafted to establish a strategic framework for management based on analysis of the Sites significance.*

*The Management Plan identifies and acknowledges the importance of a wide range of mechanisms, both statutory and non-statutory, which already exist for the protection and/or management of the World Heritage Site. In this way it co-ordinates all of these instruments into one document in a manner that will provide an invaluable source of reference and cohesive cross-organisational approaches. Therefore the Management Plan includes the statutory planning policy framework, which exists to protect and manage the World Heritage Site as well as the roles of many organisations and individuals who are actively involved in managing the landscape. In this manner the Plan provides guidelines to direct management towards clear priorities and helps to encourage and enable others to take similar action. Furthermore this partnership approach helps to ensure that objectives defined in the Plan are achievable given the constraints of law and practices carried on within the World Heritage Site.”*

8.2.42 It is as a result of the Stonehenge management plan that the current planning application is being submitted. The current management plan seeks the solution to the current outdated visitor facilities whilst still respecting the features that make the World heritage site what it is, as will be shown below it is considered that this has been achieved and that having regard to the policies and aims contained within the world heritage site management plan the proposal complies with these. It is considered that the proposal has avoided impact on the features of outstanding universal value.

8.2.43 Conclusion on development plan policies and the principle of development

8.2.44 From the spatial planning response and from the above it is clear that both government policy and regional/local policy have the same common objectives for the world heritage site, these are the protection of the world heritage site whilst removing as much as possible of the existing twentieth century development close to the stones. They also have the objective of providing a new visitor centre that will meet the educational and informational needs of those visiting the stones. It is considered that in principal this development will meet those objectives and go a significant way to securing the objectives of the WHS management plan and other documents.

## **9.0 Consideration of alternatives**

9.1 Before the selection of the Airman's corner site was made a number of other alternatives were looked at and dismissed. The applicants EIA submitted with the planning application outlines that the main alternatives were –

Option 1 The current visitor site

Option 2 Durrington Down farm

Option 3 Fargo

Option 4 Airman's corner junction

Option 5 Rollestone Camp junction

9.2 Various sites at these places were considered and discounted. Option 1 (The current visitor facilities) was considered and discounted relatively early on in the process because of the traffic and environmental considerations. Similarly Durrington Down farm was dismissed for the same reasons (option 2) as was Rollestone camp (option 5).

9.3 This left Options 3 and 4 which were Fargo and Airman's corner. There were then considered in detail. Following archaeological advice over the archaeological sensitivity of the Fargo site, Airman's corner would therefore be the most widely supported and was chosen as the final site.

9.4 In addition to choosing the area itself for the new visitor centre various sites at Airman's corner were also considered; including an alternative for a single building on land in the South East quadrant at Airman's corner. This was dismissed as it was felt that the currently proposed option minimized the visual impact of the visitor centre buildings in the landscape.

9.5 Similarly options were pursued for both the car parking and coach parking before the current layout of the site was pursued.

9.6 Following on from this various options in relation to the existing visitor facilities and the A344 were looked at in terms of the scale of removal of the existing visitor facilities. The aim was to reduce the existing visitor facilities to a minimum whilst retaining the necessary facilities for security and other essential utilities. Similarly the aim of removing the A344 was to reduce its impact on the stones and other attributes of OUV within the world heritage site.

9.7 Similarly the highway improvements at Stonehenge Bottom and Airman's Corner had a number of options that were for consideration with them and these were assessed in relation to their environmental impact, the highways requirements and cost. It was after consideration against these criteria that the current designs and options were pursued.

9.8 In summary the applicants considered that the Airman's Corner site offered the best balance in terms of environmental impact, deliverability and visitor benefits and they considered them to be an optimal response to the Stonehenge WHS management plans 2009 policies for conserving and enhancing the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS whilst maximizing opportunities.

9.9 Officers have assessed the options that the applicants have stated that they have considered during the appraisal process leading up to the submission of the planning application and have concluded that the approach taken to the options and their discounting at this stage of the process is a reasoned and logical

approach. Given the numerous constraints and considerations at this stage of the process officers consider that the final layout and site chosen is both reasonable and optimal.

## 10.0 Design of the proposal

10.1 The reasons for the siting of the proposal are considered under the section on consideration of alternatives. This section therefore assesses the design in terms of architectural merits of in particular the new visitor centre, but also of the reduced hub facility (existing visitor centre) and also of the car parking areas and ancillary building.

10.2 The main reasons for the siting of the Visitor centre building at Airman's corner in brief summary were –

Good accessibility from the A303

The location is remote from residential property

The immediate area is relatively free of archaeological remains

The choice of this site enables car and coach parking to be restricted to the perimeter of the site well away from and out of site of the stones.

10.3 The Airman's Corner site

10.4 The car park for the new visitor centre has been placed on the south side of the dry valley in the field in which it is to be situated. In order that visual intrusion across the wider landscape is minimized, being positioned on a slope like this will not only entail less excavation, but will also mean that views of the car parking from the south and east will be more restricted in the WHS as a whole.

10.5 It is intended that the ancillary building and coach parking are to be screened behind the existing row of beech trees at the site. New trees are to be added to complete the screening from views to the north and east. It is intended that new roads and water treatment tanks are placed on top of the soil to avoid disturbing potential archaeology and separated by geotextile layers to enable future reversibility. The size of the visitor centre has been kept to the minimum requirement to cater for visitor numbers up to a maximum 850 visitors per hour.

10.6 The applicants have stated that “The visitor centre is sensitively designed to sit lightly in the landscape” The aim of the project has been reversibility so that in the future at the end of its lifespan the existing visitor centre could be removed and the land restored to its current state. The centre has been designed from lightweight materials which require minimal substructure.

10.7 The applicants have stated that “the building is a simple yet distinctive architectural composition deferential to the Stones and the World Heritage Site. A conscious decision was taken that the building should not directly reference the Stonehenge monument in its form, material or alignment. “The height of the visitor centre which has been criticized during consultation on this application is comparable to the height of the tallest Trilithons at the henge and this applicants explain is so that the centre does not diminish the impact of the scale and experience of the stones.

10.8 It is intended that the building proposed will be robust enough to withstand anticipated visitor numbers whilst having a low carbon footprint and a high BREEAM rating using local, recycled and renewable materials where possible.

10.9 It is also proposed to provide a number of small Neolithic huts which will be based on an interpretation of huts found recently nearby in Durrington.

10.10 The hub facility

10.11 The majority of the buildings and built structures at the existing visitor facility will be removed (see description of development above). However a small underground facility will remain for essential staff that manage the facility at night and during the day. New and retained pedestrian pathways are to be surfaced with grey/green bound gravel to reduce their visual intrusion.

10.12 Concerns have been raised most notably by CABI to the design of the proposed new visitor facilities -

*10.13 Support principle of arranging visitor centre accommodation into two simple boxes united by a simple canopy roof However consider analogy of forest is not particularly strong. Consider that the random arrangement of columns and the way that they meet the thin edge of the roof canopy will fall short of the robust integrity that would be expected of a building like this.*

*Appealing aspect of the proposal is the delicacy of canopy roof. However concerned that the demands of supporting a paper thin canopy on slender columns in an exposed environment will require a highly engineered solution that may compromise the visually delicate structure. Question whether the roof will tend to channel wind and rain under it rather than offer the level of protection visitors expect. Consider this should be further tested.*

10.14 They have stated that they consider the principle of arranging the columns in a random fashion like a forest to be not a particularly strong feature and yet Wiltshire Council's own design forum when presented with an earlier version of the proposal specifically requested that the columns were laid out in a more random fashion and as can be seen from the Wiltshire Design Forum's comments they consider these to be much better. Given that the Wiltshire Design Forum had seen the designs at an earlier stage and know the site far better than CABI (living as the members do in the local area) It is considered their comments should be afforded more weight in these circumstances. The other structural aspects of the scheme that CABI comment on are matters which have been carefully considered by the applicants and are known to work.

10.15 CABI's comments about wishing to see a logical reasoning for positioning the buildings in the landscape is already explained and covered in the first half of this section and in the site choice selection.

10.16 Wiltshire's Design Forum have concluded that they felt the architects should be congratulated for the effort that they have put in, in a relatively short period of time and for designing a building which was very much of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

10.17 It is officers view taking into account the policies above contained within the policy section of this report, and the analyses of the design policies provided by spatial planning in combination with the comments of groups and individuals, that the building that has been produced for Airman's corner is a distinctive, robust and environmentally friendly building which whilst not intended to blend with the landscape, none the less sits comfortably within it, and will create a place that visitors will want to stay at and be attracted to. Its lightweight design and two 'pod' structure with its interesting oversailing roof is considered by officers to represent an architecturally sound proposal that will provide enhanced visitor facilities for the interpretation and education of the whole World Heritage Site.

## **11.0 Transport**

11.1 Transport and the implications for it are a crucial part of the current proposal for the WHS. Transport issues have been assessed by the applicants in a transport assessment dated September 2009.

Policies at a national level appropriate to the consideration of the transport issues are –

The future of transport white paper (2004)

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

Supplement to PPS1 planning and climate change (2006)

PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009)

PPG13 Transport

11.2 The statutory development plan policies include the Regional Planning Guidance note 10, The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 (WSP) and the saved policies of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan (SDLP). The South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the emerging Salisbury local development framework (LDF).

11.3 Other relevant policies can be found in the Wiltshire local transport plan, the Wiltshire rights of way improvement plan, The tourism strategy for South Wiltshire and the Stonehenge Management plan.

11.4 The general thrust of these documents is to encourage the fullest use of sustainable travel wherever possible, and the fullest possible choice for sustainable travel should be made available and promoted wherever possible. There should also be integration and interchange between the different transport modes as set out in both the RSS and RPG10.

11.5 PPG13 sets out the view that development which includes employment and leisure facilities should offer a realistic choice of access by public transport, walking and cycling although it does recognize that this may be less achievable in some areas.

11.6 Structure plan policy TR5 and LTP2 state that measures should be provided to encourage walking and cycling, and improve safety of these modes of transport in order to offer alternatives to the private car

11.7 Local plan policy TR12 states that –

11.8 *Permission will not be granted for major new development unless provision is made in the layout for:*

11.9 *Facilities giving priority to and allowing access by, buses, cycleways and footpaths; and direct and sustainable links to adjoining developments and urban centres, particularly those links giving priority to public transport, walking and cycling*

11.10 It can therefore be seen that there is considerable emphasis in current guidance on the need to ensure that developments provide green modes of travel.

11.11 Parking policies encourage maximum guidelines such as saved local plan policy TR11.

11.12 Structure plan policy T12 sets out proposals for an A303 Stonehenge trunk road improvement scheme (the tunnel). A public inquiry was held into this scheme and the inspectors report supported this proposal. The Secretary of State for Transport latterly announced that the tunnel did not represent value for money and therefore the scheme has not been commenced. Whilst a scheme similar to the tunnel does not form any part of this application. It does not prevent it from taking place in the future.

11.13 The proposed highway changes are as follows -

11.14 A key aim of this scheme and indeed 5b of the World Heritage Site Management Plan is to close the A344/A303 junction to vehicular traffic so that it is diverted via the A360 and A303. It is intended to close this junction and landscape it retaining the existing crossing point with a gated access on the north side into the National Trust land.

11.15 It is intended to stop up the A344 between the A303 and byway 12

11.16 It is intended to replace the current junction at Airman's Corner with a roundabout. This would include a realignment of the B3086 to the north and give better access to the visitor centre.

11.17 An improvement scheme is intended at Longbarrow roundabout which moves the roundabout away from the Longbarrow and provides improved entry capacity at the A360north and the A303east.

11.18 It is also intended as part of separate TRO applications to prevent vehicular traffic using byways 11 and 12.

11.19 Traffic modeling has been carried out by the applicants taking into account the works to be carried out and in particular the stopping up of the A344/A303 junction. Traffic modelling included taking account of the August peak levels of traffic which are currently experienced on the A303 and predicting these in the future.

11.20 The results from the traffic modeling show that the main changes that will occur with the closure of the A344/A303 junction will be at the Longbarrow roundabout and Airman's Corner which will both see increases in the level of traffic. Whilst Countess roundabout, Durrington Walls roundabout and Rolleston Camp crossroads were considered as part of the traffic modeling the results for these junctions were found to be negligible with smaller increases of traffic at these points. There was however shown to be increased traffic along the Packway as a result of driver diversion.

11.21 Both the applicants and the local authority's highways department have concluded that the proposed capacity improvements at Longbarrow roundabout will compensate for the loss of the route along the A344 to the degree that congestion on the A303 is not increased to a level that would result in significantly increased use of the A345 Countess Road north.

11.22 Using an analysis of personal injury data the applicants have concluded that the improvements to both the Longbarrow roundabout and to the Airman's Corner junction would result in a net reduction in accidents at these junctions.

11.23 Car parking was assessed using both 2002 and 2008 visitor numbers to the existing centre. The maximum predicted parking was 348 cars and 20 coaches. The currently proposed parking spaces for 500 cars and 30 coach parking spaces, this includes taking into account the longer visitor stay anticipated as part of the new visitor proposals.

11.24 Existing pedestrian access to the site will be maintained at the junction of the A344 and A303 at Stonehenge bottom. Highways have asked for a condition that requires the applicants to submit a scheme to show how crossing arrangements at Stonehenge bottom will be achieved.

11.25 As is outlined in the section on recreation (below) cyclists will be given access along the former line of the A344 and the highway condition that requests details of arrangements of access across the A344 will apply to cyclists as well as pedestrians. Although the applicants have stated that a suitably reinforced surface for cyclists will be provided, the highways condition requires details of this to be provided so that the local authority can ensure adequate access for cyclists is maintained. A further condition has been suggested by highways that requires further details of bike storage at both the new visitor centre and the drop off point close to the stones to be submitted, so that cyclists are catered for and encouraged to cycle to the stones.

11.26 Horses will not be affected by the proposals although the condition for crossing details at Stonehenge bottom would apply to horses too as they also need to be considered.

11.27 Green travel plan

11.28 Given the thrust of current national regional and local planning policy and the need as specified in policy 5d of the World Heritage Site Management Plan for an exemplary green travel plan it is important that such a plan is produced and the applicants have outlined what it is intended that the contents of the plan will be- these include –

11.29 The appointment of a travel plan coordinator to ensure that the plan is adhered to and to promote both the travel plan and the policies and targets contained within it.

11.30 Suitable travel information will be provided on sustainable methods of travel to the visitor centre this will be provided for both staff, and visitors and will be provided at the site and on the website.

11.31 There will be promotion of car sharing and promotion of the Wiltshire car sharing website.

11.32 Cycling is a key mode of transport and the green travel plan sets out to promote cycling at the site by offering discounts to staff who wish to purchase a bicycle, staff lockers and changing will be provided for those who wish to cycle to the site. The travel plan coordinator will promote the beneficial health effects of cycling.

11.33 The travel plan coordinator will work to ensure that visitors have suitable information available on walking routes to access the stones and the surrounding landscape

11.34 A current tour bus serves the existing visitor centre from Salisbury and this is intended to continue to serve the new visitor centre. This is the only bus service that runs passed the site at present and although highways have suggested bus stops outside the visitor site there is little point in this as there are no services that run via Airmans Corner at present.

11.35 Reduced price ticket admission is to be considered for those who arrive by sustainable means of transport this is something that has been in operation at the national trusts Tyntesfield estate at Wraxell near Bristol since it opened a few years ago and is something that will be considered by English Heritage at the Stonehenge site.

11.36 These are some of the main points that will be considered in the green travel plan that is to be secured by legal (s106) agreement .

11.37 Given all of the above, the consideration of local national and regional policies and the lack of objection to the scheme from the statutory consultees including both the local highways authority and the Highways Agency it is considered that the proposal given the implementation of a thorough green travel plan as outlined by the applicants and agreed with the local highways authority, will not produce significant highway effects that would warrant refusal of the application and will produce a development that serves the needs of the visitor well whilst promoting green travel methods.

11.38 A number of alternatives to the current site were considered prior to the submission of this application and these are outlined in the applicants Environmental Impact Assessment along with the reasons that they were chosen and dismissed and the reason that this particular site was eventually used. One of the reasons that the applicants outline that they chose The Airman's corner site was to minimise as far as practicable adverse impacts on the WHS, its setting and the attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value.

11.39 The management plan for the WHS seeks the removal or screening of inappropriate structures or roads and in particular the A344.

## **12.0 Archaeology and the Historic environment**

12.1 Archaeological surveys were carried out at the site that sought to identify any buried remains within the site and the method of construction has been developed in conjunction with the archaeological working group to ensure the preservation in situ of any archaeological remains. The results of the archaeological surveys carried out indicate that there are no significant remains within the site.

12.2 Wiltshire Council's archaeologist has commented on the application and her views are set out above in the consultee section of the report. She has stated that she considers the new facilities on the whole have been designed in a way to minimise their impact on the attributes of OUV of the WHS. In particular it is considered that the closure and removal of the road (A344) between Stonehenge bottom and Byway 12 would bring significant benefits for the character and setting of Stonehenge and immediately related monuments as it will restore the link between Stonehenge and the Avenue and also bring improvements to the setting of Stonehenge and the Heel stone. It is intended that where this section of road is restored to grass, works will minimise any impact on archaeology.

12.3 Similarly the decommissioning of the existing works at Stonehenge would be restricted to the existing footprint of facilities and would not affect any known archaeological remains.

In terms of the impact that the Airman's Corner site would have on the WHS and its features of Outstanding Universal Value the new development would be visible from monuments that express attributes of Outstanding Universal Value however in most cases these would be at distances of over 1km distant. It is considered that the visitor car park may present a visible intrusive element because of vehicle movements and in particular reflections of light from windows and the car surfaces. However when not in operation, it is considered that the car park would be minimally intrusive.

12.4 At present traffic on the A344 is a highly visible intrusion in the landscape, therefore the removal of this traffic would be beneficial to both the setting of Stonehenge and to the safeguarding of the OUV of the WHS as well as delivering policy 5b of the Stonehenge Management Plan.

12.5 Policy 3i of the Stonehenge Management Plan which seeks where possible to improve the visual character of the landscape would be achieved with the removal of the existing visitor facilities. At present parts of the existing visitor facilities including the car parks and coach parks are highly visible from key monument groups in the WHS including the Curses, the curses barrows and the King barrows. Therefore this would be a significant improvement to features of Outstanding Universal Value.

12.6 The construction of the new roundabout at Longbarrow crossroads although not part of this application will also allow the setting of the Longbarrow to be improved although there would also be adverse effects due to increased traffic movements and the loss of the trees. This is a finely balanced issue however given that the increase in traffic is as a direct result of the closure of the A344 which itself is a significant benefit to the WHS and a stated aim of the WHS management plan it is considered that on balance this is acceptable.

12.7 The applicants have assessed the overall proposal in the context of the following features of Outstanding Universal value

- 1 Stonehenge itself as a globally famous and iconic monument.
- 2 The physical remains of the Neolithic and bronze age funerary and ceremonial monuments and associated sites
- 3 The siting of Neolithic and bronze age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in relation to the landscape.
- 4 The design of Neolithic and bronze age funerary and ceremonial monuments in relation to the skies and astronomy
- 5The siting of Neolithic and bronze age funerary and ceremonial monuments in relation to each other:
- 6 The disposition, physical remains and settings of the key Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary, ceremonial and other monuments and sites of the period, which together form a landscape without parallel
- 7 The influence of the remains of Neolithic and Bronze age funerary and ceremonial monuments and their landscape settings on architects, artists, historians, archaeologists and others.

12.8 Having assessed these in relation to the proposal they have concluded that the overall cumulative effect of the scheme would have a large beneficial impact.

12.9 It is clear that the new scheme would have substantial beneficial effects on the setting of the Stonehenge monument and that the siting of the new visitor centre has been chosen to minimise impacts on the features of outstanding universal value. Given this and given the already considered policy implications including the complete fulfilment by this proposal of several of the WHS management plan policies it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of archaeology and the impact it has on it both above and below ground and it would be a large beneficial effect.

### **13.0 Landscape character and visual amenity**

13.1 One of the most important aspects to the Stonehenge scheme is clearly going to be its impact on the landscape and its visual amenity. The World Heritage Site is listed as such for its features of Outstanding Universal Value, these are listed in the World Heritage Site Management Plan as –

- 1.Stonehenge itself as a globally famous and iconic monument.

2. The physical remains of the Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial monuments and associated sites.
3. The siting of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in relation to the landscape.
4. The design of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in relation to the skies and astronomy.
5. The siting of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in relation to each other.
6. The disposition, physical remains and settings of the key Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary, ceremonial and other monuments and sites of the period, which together form a landscape without parallel.
7. The influence of the remains of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial monuments and their landscape settings on architects, artists, historians, archaeologists and others.

13.2 The applicants have stated that the aim of the proposed scheme is to –

*Deliver substantial beneficial effects to visual amenity and to the current landscape character and quality of the study area through the removal and concealment of intrusive built elements in the vicinity of the stones and the removal of traffic from the A344.*

*It is also to minimise the adverse effects on visual amenity and on the current landscape character and quality of the study area through appropriate siting, design and operation of the Visitor Facilities at Airman's Corner and changes at Longbarrow Roundabout.*

13.3 The applicant's assessment considered two particular impacts that come from the construction and operation of the scheme. These were

1) Changes to the physical fabric, current landscape character and quality of the countryside considered within the context of broadly defined landscape character areas.

2) Changes to the visual amenity of people (i.e. residents, recreational users, road users etc along with the cumulative effects which are also considered.

13.4 At present the landscape around the existing visitor centre and the Stonehenge monument as well as the proposed site of the visitor centre is characterised largely by rolling chalk downland which has a number of dry valleys. It is mainly an open landscape where long views are possible in most directions. These views are sometimes impeded by tree belts and tree clumps (such as the beech tree belt to the north of the new visitor site).

13.5 Clearly one of the major benefits of this scheme is the enhancement to the area around the existing visitor centre by the removal of the car park and much of the adjacent visitor facilities leaving only a small underground building coupled with the restoration to grassland of the section of the A344 between Stonehenge Bottom and Byway 12.

13.6 It will be necessary as part of the proposal to introduce 9.8m high lights at the new roundabout at Airman's Corner, which, because of the sensitivity of the environment would have cut-off lanterns to prevent light spillage beyond the highway and the lanterns would be dimmable during late night hours. A condition on lighting proposed as part of the proposal is suggested as condition at the end of this report.

13.7 The applicants assessment of the overall impact of the scheme, is that although there would be adverse effects during construction, and in particular major adverse impacts from the coach parking facilities in the first year, (before tree and shrub screens have had the opportunity to establish themselves) There would overall be slight beneficial impacts for landscape character and quality because of the changes being made at the existing visitor facility, which is so poorly screened and so visible to the stones.

13.8 Landscape policies (which are covered in detail in the initial policy section) require any proposal in general not to have an adverse impact on the landscape of the world heritage site.

13.9 Policy 1e states Development which would impact adversely on the WHS its OUV or its setting should not be permitted.

13.10 Policy 1a states Government departments, agencies and other statutory bodies responsible for making and implementing national policies and for undertaking activities that may impact on the WHS and its environs should recognise the importance of the WHS as a whole and its need for special treatment and a unified approach.

13.11 Given that there will clearly be short term adverse effects to the World Heritage site and its landscape before trees and other newly established landscaping has had the opportunity to grow and ameliorate effects from the new visitor centre and parking it is important to note that policy 1a of the World Heritage Site Management plan (which has been endorsed by Wiltshire Council) states that statutory bodies responsible for implementing national policies within the WHS “should recognise the importance of the World Heritage site as a whole” That is to say that it is not appropriate to consider just the area around the stones by itself or the area around Airman’s Cross on its own It is important to consider the effects of any new development in the WHS as a whole. When looked at from this perspective the significant positive gains from the beneficial removal of part of the A344 and the existing visitor centre and car parking must weigh heavily against any adverse effects from the proposed new visitor centre.

13.12 The spatial planning team has commented that -  
“It is important to take a balanced look at the overall aims of this scheme. While the scheme leads to new development at Airman’s Corner, it is also leading to the removal of both the A344 and the existing facilities immediately adjacent to Stonehenge within the central core of the World Heritage Site. This can only be considered a net gain in environmental terms. The removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century incursion so close to Stonehenge will contribute to returning the Scheduled Ancient Monument to a more respectful setting fitting of its international status and value.”

“Furthermore the design and lay out of the facilities are of an extremely high quality and subtle design, which seeks to keep their impact minimal. Therefore with regard to the second key test the application is considered compliant with policy C2. (of the saved policies of the adopted local plan)”

13.13 Officers therefore agree with the view of the applicants taken in the ES that the scheme overall would have a slight beneficial impact on landscape character and quality as well as for the visual amenity of recreational users.

#### **14.0 Nature conservation and biodiversity**

14.1 Nature conservation and biodiversity are important in the context of this proposal because of a number of important habitats situated close to the application site.

14.2 The area generally falls within the South Wessex Downs Natural Area as defined by Natural England. This is characterised by rolling downland, river valleys, woodlands and wetlands. The key nature conservation resources in the area are – Chalk grassland, Neutral grassland and Chalk Rivers and streams.

14.3 At a more local level directly to the North is the Salisbury Plain SPA/SAC/SSSI which supports a number of important species of birds most importantly is that the SAC supports 10% of the British breeding population of stone curlew as well as 1% of the wintering population of hen harrier. It also contains a number of important habitats and a rare species of butterfly (The marsh fritillary).

14.4 The project is also within the vicinity of the river Till which itself is part of the river Avon SSSI/SAC which is designated as such for a number of species that live within the river.

14.5 In addition there are two non-statutorily designated sites that are within the vicinity of the application site.

14.6 Stonehenge Down Site of nature conservation interest, which consists of the triangle of land within which the stones are situated and is classified because it has not been subject to significant agricultural improvement by the application of artificial fertilisers or herbicides.

14.7 There is also an RSPB reserve at Normanton Down south of the A303 which is 2.25km south east of the site for the visitor facilities. The RSPB are developing this site in terms of creating habitat suitable for Stone Curlew.

14.8 It can be seen from this that the area directly surrounding the site has a number of important designations in nature conservation and wildlife terms that need to be considered as part of this application.

14.9 The applicants have assessed a number of protected species as part of this application including carrying out surveys and updated surveys of the following –Terrestrial Macro-Invertebrates, Badgers, Bats, Deer, Birds, Brown Hare, Barn Owl and Stone Curlew and Reptiles. These surveys have found that an increase in people in the relatively open landscape between Airmans corner and the Stonehenge monument could effect ground nesting birds, and mammals such as brown hare and deer. However mitigation can be provided by controlling visitor numbers through a visitor management plan. (See conditions below). Translocation of reptiles may be required at the Longbarrow roundabout but the applicants have stated that they will be carrying this out and as the Longbarrow roundabout does not fall within the application site and such reptiles are protected under separate wildlife legislation it is not considered necessary or correct to condition this element. Having considered the impact on protected species officers are of the opinion that subject to conditions there would be no significant adverse effect on protected species.

14.10 Under the Habitat Regulations 1994, any development with the potential to affect a Special Area of Conservation and its designated species must be subject to strict scrutiny by the decision maker, in this case the LPA. The same is true for a Special protection area (SPA) The Authority should not permit any development, which would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Stonehenge SAC/SPA, or River Avon SAC alone or in combination with other developments, unless certain tests are met.

14.11 Officers have assessed this proposed development by itself and in combination with other developments both proposed and under construction. Having considered these developments in combination with those of the proposal, the subject of this application, Officers concluded that an appropriate assessment was required to be undertaken in relation to this application. Officers considered that the proposals in combination had the potential to have an effect on the SAC/SPA and as such an appropriate assessment was required.

14.12 Officers have carried out an appropriate assessment of the proposal in combination with other developments in the area and concluded that the construction and operation of the Stonehenge visitors centre at Airman's corner will not adversely affect the integrity of the River Avon SAC either alone or in combination provided that the following measures are required as planning conditions:

- Surface water drainage strategy to be submitted and agreed with the planning authority before works begin on site.
- Scheme for water efficiency measures to be submitted and agreed with the planning authority before works begin on site.
- Construction Environment Management Plan and Ecological Construction Monitoring and Management Plan to be submitted to and agreed by the planning authority before works begin on site.
- A scheme for the disposal of waste water to be submitted and agreed with the planning authority before works begin on site.

14.13 In addition conditions are needed for a visitor access management strategy and a final lighting design in order to protect the Salisbury Plain SAC as discussed in the likely significant effects test above.

14.14 It is therefore considered that the proposal will not either by itself or in combination with other proposed developments including those developments in the South Wilts Core strategy proposed submission document and proposals put forward as part of the Salisbury Super Garrison project have a significant adverse cumulative impact upon the SAC/SPA and its objectives and habitats.

14.15 Similarly to the local planning authority the applicants have concluded that the scheme would have no significant adverse effects on the integrity of the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) River Till SSSI or Salisbury Plain SAC/Special Protection Area/Ramsar/SSSI.

## **15.0 Noise and Vibration**

15.1 The effect on Greenland Farm, visitors and public rights of way users has been considered by the applicants in relation to noise and vibration from both construction of the new visitor centre and associated development and from the new visitor centre and closure of the roads when it occurs and they are operating.

15.2 Local plan policy G2 is of relevance here in that it requires avoidance of unduly disturbing, interfering, conflicting with or overlooking adjoining dwellings or uses to the detriment of existing occupiers;

15.3 It has been assessed that there are no noise sensitive receptors in the immediate vicinity of the works (the nearest being Greenland Farm 950m away) and therefore there is unlikely to be any significant effect on visitors or rights of way users although there may be some noise and vibration when the works take place although this is unlikely to be significant.

15.4 Noise and vibration when the scheme is up and running has also been assessed and in the vicinity of the stones and the old A344 road the impact of noise and disturbance is likely to be less than at present so producing a beneficial impact. It is not considered that the change in traffic level noise or the new transit system would produce a significant noise impact. Indeed policy 5a of the world heritage site management plan looks to reduce the impacts of roads and traffic on the WHS something that would be achieved in terms of noise and disturbance from the removal of the A344.

15.5 The environmental health officer of the council has raised no objections in respect of this aspect of the scheme and as such it is considered that the development as proposed in respect of noise and vibration is acceptable and that there would no significant impacts.

## **16.0 Geology and Soils**

16.1 The environmental statement submitted with the planning application at chapter 9.0 assesses the current ground conditions in relation to soils and geology in the area and then goes on to assess the potential impacts of any development upon the current ground conditions as set out in the baseline information. The ES considers as in other sections of the EIA the impact of both construction effects and longer term effects on the ground conditions in the area. It concludes that the proposal would have limited significant adverse impact on geology and soils in the area. The reason for this conclusion is as follows-

16.2 There would be limited excavation and filling in of ground levels at the site of the proposed new visitor facility.

16.3 In surveys carried out at the site (visitor centre and ancillary building) groundwater was only encountered at depths of between 21 and 36 metres.

16.4 Earthworks at the visitor centre site would make use of the existing valley sides to limit excavation work.

16.5 In relation to the repositioning of the B3086 on the north side of Airman's Corner roundabout this makes use of a previous roadline to minimise any fresh excavation work required.

16.6 Works to reposition and improve the Longbarrow roundabout will involve a 15m movement from the roundabout centre.

16.7 Overall with the exception of excavated material from the disused existing car park and some road surfacing material, there would be little exporting of materials.

16.8 Whilst the management plan for Stonehenge does not contain a specific policy for the conservation of geology and ensuring there are no adverse effects to it from development none the less policy 1e does state that –

16.9 *“Development which would impact adversely on the WHS its outstanding universal value or its setting should not be permitted”*

16.10 This is echoed in Policy CN 24 of the saved policies of the adopted local plan which states that –

16.11 CN24

*Development that would adversely affect the archaeological landscape of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, or the fabric or setting of its monuments, will not be permitted.*

16.12 It is considered that this development would not adversely impact on the WHS for the reasons outlined above (because the impact of the scheme in geology and soils terms will be so minimal) and as such in geology and soils terms the impact of this development is considered as acceptable. Although as there remains the possibility of contamination of soils during construction the effect has been assessed some limited significant adverse effects.

## **17.0 Water quality, drainage and hydrology**

17.1 Water quality, drainage and hydrology is an important aspect of this scheme with a number of consultees commenting on the proposal in this respect including the environment agency and natural England.

17.2 There are a number of policies that affect this aspect of the development (see section on policies above.) In particular at a regional level policies RE1 and RE2 of the regional spatial strategy are significant as is policy C5 of the Swindon and Wiltshire structure plan and policies G3 and G5 of the local plan which state at appendix 2

G3

*Development will not be permitted which would increase the requirement for water unless adequate resources already exist, or will be provided in time to serve the development, and without detriment to existing abstractions, water environment, both quality and quantity, fisheries, amenity or to nature conservation.*

G4

*Development will not be permitted if:*

*(i) It would be at risk itself from flooding ; (ii) it would increase the risk of flooding:  
by reducing the capacity of, or increasing flows within, a flood plain; or  
through the discharge of additional surface water; or  
by harming flood defences .*

17.3 The policies are in place to ensure that there is no increased risk to water sources from the development (both during and after construction) and to ensure that there is no increased risk of flooding.

17.4 The proposal has therefore considered the effects of –

Changes in the quantity and quality of surface water and groundwater resources and upon public and private supply abstraction dependant on those resources.

Changes to the river Till SSSI (which is part of the river Avon SSSI)

Alterations in flooding and drainage patterns.

17.5 It is intended by the applicants to make the proposed visitor centre building as self sufficient as possible in terms of water supply and foul drainage. It's remote location means that at present there is no mains water supply or foul drainage available and to provide such, would involve a lot of pipe work through potentially archaeologically sensitive areas. Therefore it is intended that the visitor centre will be self sufficient. It is intended that drainage to the new car parks and to the adjacent Airman's Corner roundabout would be provided by a SUDS system which would go into a series of swales before finally discharging into the existing dew pond. The coach parking area would have a closed drainage system which would discharge to a separate soakaway point.

17.6 The discharge of waste on site would also be achieved via a treatment plant (subject to consent from the environment agency). After it had been treated it would be directed to swales before reaching the final soakaway field.

17.7 The site is located in flood zone 1 which is the least likely to flood of the three zones set out by the Environment Agency and the applicants having assessed the effects on the floodplain of the river Till consider that the effect of the proposal would be negligible. The Environment Agency has raised no objections in respect of flooding issues.

17.8 Finally, it is also intended that rainwater from the roof areas of the new buildings would be used to add to the non potable water supplies and treated wastewater from the proposed waste treatment plant and used for toilet flushing etc. It is intended therefore that the overall demand for potable water supply would be reduced to a minimum and it is intended to supply this water by the introduction of a borehole of less than 20m<sup>3</sup> per day.

17.9 The applicants have concluded that the introduction of these measures at the new visitor site would have negligible or minor adverse impacts on water quality, drainage and hydrology.

17.10 The Environment Agency has raised no objections to the proposals but they have asked that a number of conditions be imposed to cover water supply, foul drainage, surface water drainage and pollution prevention and control.

17.11 Natural England initially asked for clarification of a number of matters including predicted usage of the water at the visitor centre, the waste water strategy and its overall effects on interests of nature conservation. Following a meeting with Natural England the applicants have clarified this matter and it is understood that subject to appropriate conditions regarding water issues, Natural England are satisfied with these aspects of the proposal.

17.12 In view of the fact that the proposal complies with local and regional policies and presents a very efficient and green use of water supplies that could be seen as an exemplar within Wiltshire. It is considered that effects on water would be negligible and therefore the effects on water interests are acceptable.

## **18.0 Air Quality & emissions**

18.1 The applicants have assessed air quality as part of the environmental statement submitted with this planning application. They have studied an area 200 metres around the new visitor centre and the surrounding roads including the A360 and the A303. Additionally the effects during the construction phase are also considered. The study considers the scope of the operation of the scheme over the next 13 years.

18.2 There are a number of national and international targets with regard to air quality that need to be considered. These at an international level include, The European Union (EU) directive on ambient Air quality Assessment and Management. Directives following this are intended to set specific targets including 1999/30EC.

18.3 At a national level The National Air Quality Strategy 2000 introduced targets to improve air quality by 2010. Revised air quality objectives have been published including objectives contained within the first addendum in 2003. In addition PPS23 which covers planning and pollution control provides guidance on how to assess pollution in relation to planning applications

18.4 The Environment Act of 1995 requires the local authority to carry out a review and an assessment of local air quality which is done in 3 stages as outlined in the applicants EA. Salisbury district council have carried out a review of air quality in the area of the development and have concluded that at present national air quality targets are unlikely to be exceeded.

18.5 Three potential pollutants were considered as part of this application

- 1) Any potential increase in exhaust emissions due to increases in traffic onto the local highway network, and air quality impacts from the visitor transit system vehicles.
- 2) Air pollutant emissions associated with building services at the new visitor facility
- 3) Dust and airborne particle emissions associated with the construction of the development.

18.6 Clearly the removal of much of the traffic from the A344 (with the exception of the transit system) will remove vehicle borne pollutants from that particular area (albeit mostly to surrounding roads).

18.7 The analysis of the data collected for the increase in traffic levels, the new building and the construction phase of the development, shows that any effects for the purposes of the EIA would be insignificant and that the scheme would have no significant adverse impact on sensitive receptors such as homes or work places. The council's environmental health officer has stated that he has no objection to the scheme and as such and taking into account the above officers consider that it complies with policies on pollution and that no objection to this aspect of the scheme should be raised as the proposal would have no significant adverse impacts.

## **19.0 Agriculture**

19.1 Planning policy statement 7 (Development in rural areas) and policy C12 of the Wiltshire and Swindon structure plan (see policy section above) are important in considering the loss of agricultural land and these are both similar in their approach to safeguarding the most important agricultural land which is defined as grades 1 and 2 and subgrade 3a. Similarly it is also important to consider soil as distinct from agricultural land and in relation to the World heritage site management plan soil resources should be balanced against the need to conserve archaeology.

19.2 The total area of agricultural land take at the new visitor centre site is about 6.1 hectares, existing use of the visitor centre land is arable the amount of this land in sub grade 3a would be 2.4 hectares with a further 0.3 hectares used for highway development. The agricultural soils under the new visitor centre would not be removed but would be compacted prior to having the new visitor centre placed upon it. The decommissioning of the existing visitor facilities would create 0.8 hectares of agricultural land for the National Trust landholding and 0.5 hectares for English Heritage's Stonehenge Guardianship Area.

19.3 In terms of policy as already assessed under the policy section of this report it is not considered that the loss of 2.4 ha of agricultural land in policy terms is contrary to policy C12 as it represents exceptional need where other sites have already been assessed. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with local and national policy in terms of agricultural loss of land and the scheme would have no significant impacts on agricultural resources.

## **20.0 Socio economic effects**

20.1 The ES submitted with the planning application assesses two issues –

20.2 The range of economic, social and community benefits  
The measures to mitigate any potential disbenefits and maximise the potential benefits

20.3 The assessment considered the effects (both positive and negative) on the surrounding area including the villages of Bulford, Amesbury, and Durrington and the wider area.

20.4 The assessment considered the potential effects from the development in social-economic terms against current baseline conditions. It considered these in two separate categories these being –

20.5 Construction effects and Operational effects

20.6 The main policy documents considered are –

The regional Economic strategy for the South West England 2006-2015  
Integrated Regional strategy- just connect! 2004  
Single regional strategy-2011-2012  
Tourism strategy-towards 2015: shaping tomorrow's tourism 2005-2015  
South West England Legacy Strategy for the 2012 Games, 2007  
Wiltshire and Swindon Economic Strategy, 2003-2008  
Wiltshire Core strategy Development plan document (adoption August 2011)  
Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016  
Salisbury district saved policies of the adopted local plan 2003  
South Wiltshire Core strategy  
Salisbury and South Wiltshire Economic Development Strategy 2002 -2020  
Tourism strategy for South Wiltshire, 2006  
Salisbury District Council Tourism Policy  
Sustainable Community Strategy for Wiltshire 2007-2016  
Local Area agreement for Wiltshire June 2008

20.7 The South Wiltshire economic development team (Wiltshire Council) have commented as follows -

*Having reviewed the application information, the key aspects from an economic development standpoint are that the proposal will-*

*Attract and provide for increase visitor numbers to the area;  
Enhance the visitor experience thereby encouraging repeat/multiple visits;  
Create potential local employment opportunities during the construction/ implementation stage;  
Create the potential for local businesses and services to be engaged and have input during the construction/implementation stage; and Increase the workforce requirements at Stonehenge-thereby creating new local permanent employment opportunities.*

20.8 In addition have the South West RDA have stated (in summary) that-

*The proposals will ensure an improved visitor experience at Stonehenge. They are likely to increase visitor spend and dwell time at the attraction and at tourist locations across Wiltshire and the South West. This will help to support the tourism section of the economy and will result in an increased number of direct, indirect and induced jobs.*

*It makes the point that tourism is worth over 9 billion a year to the local economy, employing more than 250,000 people and attracting over 26,000,000 visitors a year. A replacement visitor centre that surpasses the offer of the current facility, has the potential to encourage visitors to spend more time there and to integrate their trips with visits to other parts of Wiltshire and the South West is considered an improvement.*

20.9 The South Wiltshire Economic Partnership have stated that –

*It is a fundamental objective of the SWEP strategy to support the creation of a world class visitor's centre at Stonehenge in order to attract inward investment into the local community. Any concerns we have are based on the transport strategy however understand there are plans to improve the infrastructure surrounding the development. SWEP also keen to identify opportunities for local businesses to be engaged with the Stonehenge visitors centre in particular the development and construction phase.*

20.10 There is clearly therefore strong support for the proposal as it currently stands because it is considered from an economic point of view that the proposal will attract further inward investment to the area

20.11 The ES concludes on construction effects that the new visitor facility will have a minor beneficial increase in the level of local employment from construction taking place in the local economy.

20.12 The longer term effects are considered under operational effects and it is considered that 17.5 full time direct permanent jobs would be supported by the visitor centre. The employment expenditure in terms of salaries will increase as a result of the visitor facility and it is therefore considered that there will be a net benefit when this salary is spent in the local region.

20.13 In addition to the increased income that is likely to be generated by this scheme it also needs to be borne in mind that the facility will produce additional education and learning benefits.

20.14 Overall there are significant tangible and intangible effects in a socio economic sense from the movement of the visitor centre to Airman's Corner and the upgrade of the facilities both at the visitor site and further afield. The proposal complies with the tourism policy T3 of the saved policies of the adopted local plan which provides for a new visitor centre at Stonehenge and as such it is considered that the proposal in socio-economic terms is acceptable as it is considered it would have no significant adverse impacts.

## **21.0 Recreation**

21.1 A considerable number of representations have been received with regard to the closure of Byway 12 and whilst this is subject to a separate order under highway legislation as it is connected with the overall development scheme it is important to consider it here along with other recreational and access issues that are brought up as part of the application. In this respect the applicant's environmental statement addresses these in chapter 14.

21.2 The applicants ES consider the following aspects-

-Access provision for pedestrians in relation to public footpaths, bridleways, byways and roads and national trust permissive paths and open access land.

-Access provision for cyclists in relation to bridleways, byways and roads and promoted on road and off road cycle routes.

-Access provision for equestrians (horse riders/carriage drivers) in relation to bridleways byways and roads.

-Access provision for motorised vehicles (4x4/s/motorbikes) in relation to recreational use of byways and roads.

-Opportunities for other informal countryside recreation activities.

21.3 The development would affect existing pedestrian routes to Stonehenge via the closure of the A344 including removing the road surface and removing the legal right of access for pedestrians between Stonehenge bottom and byway 12. This would however be provided for via a route on reinforced drained grass within the footprint of the A344, which would mean pedestrians would still have access to Stonehenge during normal hours of operation.

21.4 Potential risks to pedestrians crossing the road at Stonehenge bottom could increase from the closure of the A344 and therefore the Highways Agency and Wiltshire Council have agreed a condition that requires the submission of a scheme for the crossing of this road to be submitted should planning permission be granted. Any scheme will have to be agreed with the council before development takes place and the scheme will need to be in place before the development is occupied.

21.5 It is also intended that pedestrians would continue to be able to walk along the section of the A344 between byway 12 and Airman's Corner alongside the new transit system. Given the likely

number and speed of transit vehicles it is not considered that there will be any significant safety implications arising from both pedestrians and transit vehicles using the same stretch of road as this would be a considerable reduction on the traffic currently using this road which pedestrians also can use.

21.6 It is also intended that those less able bodied visitors would be able to use the transit system from the new visitor centre to the monument which will have a minimum of 2 wheelchair places. There will then be a DDA compliant path connecting the transit stop at the stones with the existing path around the monument.

21.7 Cyclists too will be affected in a similar way to pedestrians by the closure of the A344 at Stonehenge bottom. It is intended that cyclists will also have access to a drained and reinforced grass route between Stonehenge bottom and byway 12. It is not proposed that a hard access is provided as this would essentially just reintroduce part of the road that has been removed and would be contrary to one of the main aims of the project in removing such hard surfaces close to the stones. It is intended that there would be a gated access at Stonehenge bottom for cyclists open during the hours the stones are open. This scheme is conditioned below so that details can be agreed with the local highway authority.

21.8 Horse riders will also be affected by the closure of the A344 at Stonehenge Bottom and will not be allowed to continue to use this crossing point as it is considered this would be incompatible with the archaeology and management of visitors in the area. However an alternative crossing point further west across the A303 does exist to Byway 12 and this can be utilised by horse riders and they can continue to use that part the A344 which extends from byway 12 to Airman's corner as at present.

21.9 The use of existing byways 11 and 12 within the WHS would be affected by the proposed development. As stated above it is intended to restrict the use of byways 11 and 12 by the use of a traffic regulation order under separate highway legislation. This particular aspect of the proposal complies with policy 5c of the WHS management plan 2009 which supports restricting vehicular access with the exception of emergency, operational and farm vehicles) This is in order to reduce the impacts on the features of Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. The existing use of the byway by motorised vehicles has damaged some barrows close to the track through widening of the Byway. The closure of the byways will therefore help comply with policy.

21.10 The construction of the proposal as a whole is considered to have temporary effects and impacts on recreational routes in the area. However these would be temporary and it is not considered that they would be so adverse as to require further mitigation during the construction period.

21.11 At present local people living in villages immediately around the stones have free access to the monument when they wish. It is intended to continue this and therefore it is proposed that this be included in the legal agreement.

21.12 In conclusion it is considered that the scheme would have a major beneficial effect on the amenity of most users of the recreational routes (Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians) and on visual amenity by removing the lines of cars parked on the byway during the summer months. It would have a major adverse impact on a relatively small group of motorised vehicle users of byways within the WHS. It is considered by officers that the displacement of this group of recreational users of the byways would be far outweighed by the improvement to the environment for other users of the route including ramblers/pedestrians and horse riders by the reduction in noise and disturbance and the reduced impact on the barrows lying close to the byway. It is therefore considered that the proposals for recreational users of the area are acceptable and would have beneficial impacts.

## **22.0 Any other issues**

### **22.1 Icomos comments**

22.2 Icomos have raised a number of comments about this application, the majority of which are covered in the various sections above. They do however, raise points about the design of the roof of the proposed visitor centre and the fact that they consider that the building could sit lower in the landscape. The building is single storey and the roof which has a gently curving and undulating design mirrors the undulating nature of the surrounding landscape. The only way to make this building sit in any other way in the landscape would be to reduce the height of the roof. This however would detract from the architectural integrity of the building in trying to hide it in the landscape. A balance has to be struck between architectural form and landscape form and officers consider that the proposal is acceptable in this respect.

22.3 There are a number of issues raised by third parties that are not covered above these include-

*Will tourists use the facility as it is considered too far from the stones?*

22.4 It is considered by officers that tourists will use this facility as it is an iconic monument known worldwide which tourists will wish to visit. The visitor centre has been positioned as close to the monument as it can reasonably be without having a significant adverse effect on features of OUV.

*Concerned there is no equality and diversity assessment*

22.5 An equality and diversity assessment is not a requirement for the processing of this application. Although it is necessary for the applicant and local authority to assess that adequate facilities are available for those with disabilities. This has been assessed by the applicant and is covered in this report at section 21.0 (recreation). The actual visitor centre will need to be DDA compliant which is covered under building regs. It is intended that out of hours at special occasions such as Solstices, disabled access will be allowed down the former A344. During visitor opening hours the land train will make access available to less able bodied visitors as it will make provision for them (see conditions).

*Concern is expressed that the proposal is being rushed through to meet the Olympic deadline*

22.6 Whilst it is the applicant's intention to enable the visitor centre to be open by the 2012 Olympics. The proposal is not being rushed through. The applicants have looked at the site in depth and looked at all the alternative sites. They have spent considerable time consulting with groups and individuals before submitting a planning application. The planning application outlines the proposals in depth. The planning application has been assessed in depth as is evidenced in the report and has taken longer than the governments target for such applications. It is not considered to be the case that the planning application is being rushed.

*Promises on duelling the area around Stonehenge have been forgotten*

22.7 The duelling of the A303 is not part of this proposal and is not part of the Assessment of the application. Both the highways department and The Highways Agency consider that the proposal can go ahead without the duelling of the A303 subject to changes to be carried out to the Long barrow roundabout under separate legislation. This does not mean that the duelling of the A303 cannot take place at a later date when the funding is available.

*Concerned about the length of time for consultation.*

22.8 Residents were given the statutory three weeks to view this application. Following the omission of a couple of documents from the initial planning submission a further two weeks on top of the initial three weeks were given. Following this anybody who asked for more time to write in was given it and in practice officers have continued to accept letters of representation up until the date of the committee. Officers consider enough time has been given for third parties and consultees to consider and comment on this application.

*Development will interfere with religious right as a pagan druid to attend ceremonies*

22.9 It is not the intention of the application to interfere with rights to visit the stones. English Heritage is currently looking at special arrangements for the various equinoxes and Solstices to ensure that

access is not denied to the stones. A condition requires details of a scheme to be submitted to the local planning authority (see conditions below).

*Consider that vehicles with low CO2 emissions should be used to transport passengers or possibly horse drawn vehicles.*

22.10 Whilst horse drawn vehicles are unlikely to be practical to transport the number of anticipated visitors, the applicants are looking at the scheme of vehicles to be used between the Stones and the visitor centre and will consider the issue of lower polluting vehicles. It is proposed to condition the transit system such that the local authority has details of it prior to the visitor centre coming into use. See conditions below.

*Considers that the cost of the project is too high*

22.11 The cost of the project is not a material planning consideration

*Considers that a non polluting rail link to Stonehenge should be developed*

22.12 Similarly to the duelling of the A303 this is not part of the planning application. The highways authorities do not consider it necessary in order to approve the planning application.

### **23.1 Conclusion**

23.2 It is clear from the information submitted that this is a very thoroughly thought out proposal. The consideration of alternatives chapter of the ES sets out clearly a structured and logical selection process for the choosing of the final Airman's corner site, which included public consultation. The Airman's corner site has it is considered the best advantages of all the preferred sites taking into account the very considerable constraints and barriers to development that exist within the WHS.

23.3 The final chosen site at Airman's Corner has, in officer's opinion, the least overall effect on the WHS (taking into account other constraints from other considered sites) and will provide a visitor centre that befits a landscape of the quality of the Stonehenge WHS. It will provide the solution to the ongoing issue of a new visitor centre at Stonehenge and fulfil a key policy of the Wiltshire Council endorsed World Heritage Site Management Plan. It will provide new interpretation and education facilities much lacking at present, in a building which the Wiltshire Design Forum have stated is "fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century"

23.4 Inevitably the final scheme has some negative aspects including the fact that closure of the A344 will mean that traffic that would usually use the A344 particularly to Shrewton and villages beyond will inevitably have a longer journey to the Longbarrow crossroads and around using the A303. Similarly the visitor centre as proposed will be visible within the World heritage site though not from Stonehenge itself

23.5 These in parts however need to be balanced with the significant improvements to the setting of the stones that would be achieved from the removal of the existing visitor centre and car park and the removal of the A344 between byway 12 and Stonehenge bottom including the fulfilment of WHS management plan policies that these achieve.

23.6 It has been shown above that the proposal achieves national, regional and local planning policy objectives and it is against this background that the proposal should be judged. Officers consider that the proposal is the optimum solution for this site and it is for this reason that the planning application is recommended for approval.

24.0 Recommendation:

**Planning Permission be Granted following completion of a section 106 legal agreement.**

**Reason for approval**

It is considered that the proposal for the removal of much of the existing visitor centre and all the current parking provision will bring significant improvements to the environs of the Stonehenge monument and comply with policy 3i of the World Heritage Site management Plan. In addition the closure of the A344 would fulfill policy 5b of the World Heritage site management plan in that it would remove a significant amount of traffic from directly opposite the Stonehenge monument and therefore improve substantially the setting of the monument and the negative effect the road is currently having on the features of Outstanding Universal Value.

The new visitor centre at Airmans corner would bring a significant improvement to the current visitor attractions creating greater understanding of the World Heritage Site via improved interpretation and education facilities much lacking at the moment and as such would comply and fulfill policy 4J of the World heritage site management plan as well as saved local plan policy T3.

It is considered that the proposed visitor centre and its associated buildings and structures will sit well within the landscape and although will be visible, have, it is considered, been positioned in the most appropriate part of the World heritage site with the least effect on features of Outstanding Universal Value. It is therefore considered in combination with the implementation (subject to conditions) of the full details of the application and the environmental statement and when having had regard to all relevant planning considerations in particular saved local plan policies from the adopted Salisbury district local plan and the World Heritage Site Management plan that the proposal is considered acceptable.

#### **The section 106 agreement shall cover the following issues-**

- 1.The construction of a new roundabout at Airmans corner along with lighting drainage and signage.
- 2.A Travel plan
- 3.Road traffic and Highway Orders
- 4.The provision of a tourist information display area within the visitor centre
- 5.Free access to local people to the stones
- 6.A Scheme for Movement of the Airmans Cross monument and its ongoing maintenance and a scheme to move and reinstate the milestone adjacent the cossroads.
- 7 A requirement for using the stopped up part of the A344 for pedestrians and cyclists.

For the following reasons

- 1.To ensure that there is adequate highway capacity to deal with the increased traffic at Airmans Corner as a result of moving the visitor centre and closing of the A344.
- 2.To ensure that sustainable methods of transport are developed and maintained to the visitor centre in order to reduce individual car borne journeys.
- 3.In order to ensure that the highway improvements and alterations proposed as part of this development are carried out and in accordance with the relevant highway legislation.
- 4.To ensure that the Stonehenge 'gateway' is used to promote other destinations within Wiltshire and to promote tourism which will benefit the local economy.
- 5.At present local people within surrounding villages have free access to the stones this requirement therefore is to ensure that, such free access continues and that locals are not disadvantaged by this development.
- 6.A scheme for the movement of the Airmans Cross monument is required in order to ensure that the monument is restored and if the accompanying listed building application is approved that it is moved to a new setting within the ownership of English Heritage.
- 7 In order to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists continue to have rights to walk and cycle up this route and to ensure that they do not have to detour on a longer route.

**And 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.

Policy G1 – General principles for development

2) The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved schedule of materials and finishes to be used for the external walls and roofs of the proposed development and all other built structures hereby permitted, or with such other details as may subsequently be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. As development progresses and where materials and finishes have not been agreed prior to commencement of development, these (and where so required samples or sample panels of such materials and finishes) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before their use. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To secure a harmonious form of development and for the avoidance of doubt.

Policy D1 Extensive development

Policy D2 Infill development

3) No development hereby approved shall commence until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a plan indicating the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatment to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be completed before the visitor centre building is occupied and in accordance with a timetable agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to secure the satisfactory treatment of the boundaries in the interests of visual amenity and securing adequate standards of privacy for occupants of the neighbouring premises.

Reason: To enable the local Planning Authority to secure the satisfactory treatment of the boundaries in the interests of the visual amenity of the world heritage site.

Policy CN24 Stonehenge World Heritage site

#### 4) Landscaping Scheme

The development hereby approved shall not commence until details of the landscaping scheme including site clearance and a statement of the methods of its implementation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The scheme must include details of the proposed planting including a plan, details of species, stock sizes and numbers/densities where appropriate, and including a timetable for its implementation. If any plant dies, becomes diseased or fails to thrive within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, or is removed, uprooted or destroyed, it must be replaced by another plant of the same kind and size and at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority agrees to a variation beforehand in writing.

The landscaping must be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and statement, unless the Local Planning Authority has given its prior written consent to any variation.

Reason: To comply with the duties indicated in Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 so as to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

#### Retention of Existing Trees and Shrubs:

No tree, shrub, or hedge which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be cut down, uprooted, wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. All tree works approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard Recommendations for Tree Work (B.S.3998: 1989).

If any tree, shrub or hedge shown to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars is removed, uprooted or destroyed, or dies, or becomes severely damaged or diseased within 5 years of the completion of the development, another tree, shrub, or hedge shall be planted at the approximate same place, and that tree, shrub, or hedge shall be of such a size specification, and species, and should be planted at such time as may be specified in writing by the Local Authority.

If within a period of five years from the date of planting any replacement tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed, or dies or becomes seriously damaged or defective another tree of the species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at approximately the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To comply with the duties indicated in Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 so as to safeguard the amenity of the existing trees and to ensure a satisfactory appearance of the development.

#### Policy C9 Landscape conservation

#### 5) Submission of Tree Protection Statement:

No development shall take place on site, including site clearance, tree works, demolition, storage of materials or other preparatory work, until all details relevant to the retention and protection of trees, hereafter called the Arboricultural Method Statement, have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. Thereafter the development shall be undertaken only in accordance with the approved details, unless the Local Planning Authority has given its prior written consent to any variation.

The Arboricultural Method Statement shall show areas, which are designated for the protection of trees, shrubs and hedges, hereafter referred to as Tree Protection Zones. Unless otherwise agreed, the Tree Protection Zones will be fenced, in accordance with British Standard Guide for Trees in Relation to Construction (BS5837: 1990) and no access will be permitted to the Tree Protection Zone for any development operation. Tree protection zones shall be provided for all trees to be retained on the site and also to take account of the root spread into the site of trees on adjoining sites.

The Arboricultural Method Statement shall also include all other relevant details, such as changes in levels, methods of demolition and construction, the materials, design and levels of roads, footpaths, parking areas and of foundations, walls and fences, placement of service runs i.e. BT, water, gas, sewage, electric etc. It shall also include the control of potentially harmful operations, such as

burning, the storage, handling and missing of materials, the movement of people and machinery across the site, where these are within ten metres of any designated Tree Protection Zone. The Arboricultural Method Statement shall indicate the specification and timetable of any tree works, which shall be in accordance with the British Standard Recommendations for Tree Works (BS3998, 1989).

The Arboricultural Method Statement shall include the provision for the supervision and inspection of tree protection measures on a regular basis throughout the different phases of construction. Reports produced as a result of these inspections shall be forwarded to the Local Authority Arboricultural Officer. The fencing, or other protection which is part of the approved Statement shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works, including external works and soft landscaping have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from site, unless the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority has been given in writing.

Reason: To comply with the duties indicated in Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, so as to ensure that the amenity value of the most important trees, shrubs and hedges growing within or adjacent to the site is adequately protected during the period of site clearance and construction.

Policy C9 Landscape conservation

6)No development on the Visitor Transit System pick up and drop off points shall commence until, details of the Visitor Transit System have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority; such details to demonstrate the efficacy of the turning and waiting facilities proposed, at both operational ends of the site, and in the overnight parking area. Such a visitor transit system shall have at least two places on each train/unit to accommodate users in wheelchairs or other mobility impaired passengers and shall be brought into use concurrent with the opening of the visitor centre.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed layout can properly accommodate the operational requirements of the VTS trains and to ensure visitors who are mobility impaired can continue to access the Stonehenge monument.

*Informative: The VTS will be running on a public highway. It must therefore comply with all necessary legislation related to such vehicles.*

Policy G2(i) General criteria

7)Notwithstanding the details of gating arrangements shown on the submitted drawings, the applicant shall, prior to the commencement of the development, obtain approval from the local planning authority to further detailed drawings showing how vehicles accessing the A344 can turn around and return westbound in forward gear, including all points where access is restricted by proposed gating.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to avoid the inconvenience otherwise caused to larger vehicles that might need to gain access for highway maintenance or other purposes.

Policy G2 (i) and (ii) General criteria for development.

8)No development shall commence on the A344 and byway 12 until the applicant has submitted to and secured the written approval of the local planning authority of a scheme demonstrating how any gating or bollarding measures on the A344 are to be operated, their legal status, and what provisions are to be made for vehicles reasonably requiring access to the public highway and, beyond, to the stopped up section of A344 between Byway 12 and Stonehenge Bottom. Gating arrangements shall only be provided and operated in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To demonstrate that a managed scheme will allow for the requirements of all proper vehicular users of the highway at all times of the day and night throughout the year.

Policy G2 (i) and (ii) General criteria for development.

9) Prior to the commencement of the development the applicant shall submit to and secure approval of the local planning authority to an interim scheme demonstrating how visitors during 2011 Summer Solstice, will be accommodated, and afforded access to their temporary parking facilities via the A344.

Prior to the occupation of development the Applicant shall submit to and secure approval of the local planning authority to a permanent scheme demonstrating how visitors during exceptional circumstances, such as summer solstice, will be accommodated, and afforded access to their temporary parking facilities via the A344. Parking arrangements shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure that local road congestion is not caused at the proposed Airman's Corner roundabout junction during exceptionally high levels of visitation, and in a circumstance where enforcement of a traffic regulation order could otherwise cause access difficulties.

Policy G2 (ii) General criteria for development

10) No development shall commence of the visitor centre hereby approved until a visitor management strategy as detailed in section seven of the environmental statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall operate in accordance with the approved scheme unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In order to ensure that there is no adverse effect on the Salisbury Plain SAC

Policy C10 Nature conservation

11) No development shall commence until (i) details of the pedestrian and cycle route along the whole of the A344, including crossing arrangements at the A303 (Stonehenge Bottom) and (ii) a scheme for reviewing such access and crossing arrangements, have been submitted to and approved (in consultation with the Highways agency) in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be occupied until the agreed works have been completed. Any changes shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To accommodate and facilitate the inevitable future local pedestrian and cyclist demand travelling the route between the Stones and west Amesbury, and provision of a safe crossing point on the A303 when the right turn facility currently in place is removed.

*Informative: For the avoidance of doubt, the scheme for reviewing the access and crossing arrangements shall have regard to Design Manual for Roads and Bridges HD19/03 Stage 4 Safety Audit 12 and 36 month post-scheme recommendations for remedial action. It shall detail how recommended remedial action will be funded and implemented, including arrangements to provide for alternative crossing points on the A303 and associated access links.*

Policy TR12 (ii) Cycling

12) The visitor centre hereby approved shall not be open for public use, until the developer has upgraded the surface of Byway 12 between the A344 and the Sustrans National Cycle Route 45.

Reason: In order to facilitate the objectives of the travel planning requirements for the site insofar as they relate to encouraging pedestrian and cycle transport.

#### Policy TR12 (ii &iii) Cycling and pedestrians

13) No development shall commence until, a scheme and programme for cycle parking and storage provision at the western end of the retained A344 and for cycle parking at the eastern end has been submitted for approval to the local planning authority. The facilities shall be provided in accordance with the approved scheme and programme.

Reason: In order to facilitate the objectives of the travel planning requirements for the site insofar as they relate to encouraging pedestrian and cycle transport, and to discourage random parking of cycles within the vicinities of the Stones and the proposed Visitor Centre.

#### Policy TR12 (ii&iii) Cycling and pedestrians

14) The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied nor will the closure of the A344/A303 junction (which will be the subject of a stopping up order under section 247 of the TCPA 2000) take place unless and until the scheme for modification of Longbarrow roundabout broadly shown on preliminary design drawing MP-A-G100-P-02 (rev i) shall be implemented and completed to the satisfaction of the highways agency.

Reason: To ensure that the scheme for Longbarrow roundabout is designed and constructed to appropriate standards enabling the A303 to operate effectively, following the closure of the A344/A303 junction in accordance with circular 02/07 planning and the strategic road network.

#### Policy G2 (ii) General criteria for development

15) The development shall not commence until a construction management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, (in consultation with the secretary of state for transport). The plan shall include details of the number and frequency of construction vehicle movements, construction operation hours, construction vehicle rates to and from the site with distance details, construction delivery hours, car parking for contractors, specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts (including infrastructure improvements if appropriate) a construction workers travel plan and a detailed traffic management plan to control traffic during the construction phases.

Reason: To mitigate the impact of construction traffic during the construction period and in the interests of highway safety on the local and strategic road network.

#### Policy C10 Nature conservation

16) The development hereby approved shall not commence until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, a landscape management plan.

The landscape management plan shall contain a statement for the long-term effective maintenance of the agreed landscape scheme and full details of all management and establishment operations over a ten-year period, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. It shall also include details of the relevant management, and supervisory responsibilities.

The landscape management plan shall also include the provision for a review to be undertaken during the course of the plan with a final review being undertaken before the end of the ten-year period. A revised landscape management plan shall be submitted for the agreement of the Local Planning Authority before the ten years has expired. The revised details shall make similar provisions for the long-term maintenance and management of the landscape scheme. The revised scheme shall also make provision for future revision and updating.

The provisions of the landscape management plan and subsequent revisions shall be adhered to and any variation shall have been agreed beforehand in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No trees, shrubs, hedges or other plants shall be removed for the duration of the landscape management scheme or its revisions, without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Management of the landscape scheme in accordance with the landscape management plan or their agreed revisions shall not cease before the duration of the use of the development unless agreed in writing by the local Planning Authority.

Reason: To comply with the duties indicated in Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, so as to ensure that the amenity to be provided by the new landscaping is achieved and safeguarded, and to ensure satisfactory appearance to the development.

Policy C1 The rural environment

17) The visitor centre shall not commence commercial operation until the approved car parks have been constructed, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plans

Reason: To ensure that the development hereby permitted is provided with adequate facilities for the parking of vehicles.

Policy TR11 Parking

18) The visitor centre shall not commence commercial operation until the transit route and drop off points have been provided within the site in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure adequate access to Stonehenge is provided for visitors.

Policy G2 (i) General criteria for development

19) The Visitor Centre shall not be brought into commercial operation until such time that a system of internal pedestrian footpaths, within the visitor centre site itself, has been completed in accordance with detailed drawings to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: to facilitate pedestrian movement on identified desire lines.

Policy TR12 (ii) Cycleways and footpaths

20) No development shall be commenced until such time as a scheme to provide details of water supply, water efficiency measures (in line with the principles within the water and waste strategy appendix A10.1 of the Environmental statement) and mechanisms for monitoring water use has been submitted to and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. Any such scheme shall be supported by detailed information relating to water efficiency measures which will be included, revised calculations on predicted water use and how water use will be monitored. The scheme shall be fully implemented prior to the opening of the visitor centre in accordance with the scheme, or any changes as may be subsequently be agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: The site is located on a major aquifer within the catchment of the River Avon SCA/SSSI. The South Wiltshire core strategy proposed submission document July 2009; policy 19 includes the requirement for non-residential development to include water efficiency measures.

Policy G3 Water environment

Policy C10 Nature conservation

21) No development shall commence until a detailed scheme for the disposal of foul drainage has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority. Details should include whether discharge is to ground or surface water, location of discharge, details of emergency storage proposals and emergency arrangements for tinkering off-site. The scheme shall be completed in accordance with the approved plans before development of the site begins.

Reason: The site is located on a major aquifer within the catchment of the River Avon SCA/SSSI. Appropriate drainage arrangements will ensure groundwater is protected.

Policy G3 Water environment

22) No Development shall commence until the detailed design of the surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage and pollution control principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed and shall also include details of how the scheme shall be maintained and managed after completion.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding to improve and protect water quality, improve habitat and amenity and ensure future maintenance of the surface water drainage system.

Informative

The applicant should be aware that any works offering an obstruction to flow within an ordinary watercourse will require prior flood defence consent from the environment Agency in accordance with S23 of the land drainage Act 1991. Further guidance is available from the Environment Agency development and flood risk officer- Daniel Griffin (01258 483351)

Policy G3 Water environment

23) No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a detailed construction Environmental Management plan, incorporating the pollution prevention measures identified within the outline construction construction environmental management plan, has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The plan shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details and agreed timetable.

Reason: The site is located on a major aquifer with the catchment of the river Avon SCA/SSSI. Appropriate pollution prevention arrangements during construction will ensure groundwater and surface water are protected.

Policy C10 Nature Conservation

24) No development shall commence until details of all lighting proposals, including street lighting, lighting for the car and coach parks, lighting for footpaths, lighting at the drop off points, including intensity of the lighting and design for the light column shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the development hereby permitted commencing. All the works shall subsequently accord with the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure that the lighting scheme respects the overall design qualities required from the development and to minimise impact of the lighting scheme upon both the World Heritage Site and wider landscape and nature conservation interests.

Policy C10 Nature Conservation  
Policy C1 The rural Environment

Policy G2 (ii&iv) General criteria for development

25) The retail unit within the visitor centre hereby permitted shall not commence trading until details of the broad range of goods to be sold have been submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority. The shop shall not sell goods outside of the agreed range, other than as a minor and ancillary part of the stores operation without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to exercise adequate control over the kind of goods which are sold from the premises, in the interests of maintaining the vitality and viability of Amesbury town centre.

Policy S4 Out of centre Retail Development

26) No development shall commence within the application area until:

- a) A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and
- b) The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that artefacts of archaeological importance are properly recorded and evaluated.

Policy CN22 Ancient monuments and Archaeology

27) The new visitor centre building hereby permitted may be used occasionally for evening functions such as fundraising and corporate entertaining. On each occasion English Heritage must submit the request in writing, outlining the nature of the function and times, and shall not commence without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Such a request should be submitted to the local authority at least 14 days prior to the function taking place. If no response is received from the local planning authority within the 14 days the function or event may take place.

Reason: To control extra-curricula use of the building.

Policy G2 (ii) General criteria for development

28) The development hereby permitted shall not commence until a waste audit, to include measures to deal with littering has been completed in accordance with the supplementary planning guidance to the Wiltshire Structure Plan and been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: in the interests of achieving a sustainable development

G2 (viii) General criteria for development (pollution)

<b>Appendices:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1) List of local plan policies</b></li><li><b>2) List of all relevant policies and documents for the consideration of this application</b></li><li><b>3) Wiltshire Highways response</b></li><li><b>4) Copies of consultee responses</b></li><li><b>5) Copy of Spatial Planning response</b></li></ul>
	<b>Environmental Statement (including appendices) Dated September</b>

<b>Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:</b>	<b>2009</b> <b>Design and Access statement (Denton Corker Marshall)</b> <b>Bat Survey dated</b> <b>Breeding Bird Survey dated</b> <b>Transport Assessment dated</b> <b>Statement of Community involvement dated</b> <b>Plan no's as specified in Appendix A of the applications design and access statement.</b>
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**BRAD FLEET**  
Service Director, Development

## **Appendix 1 - List of local plan policies**

### **G1**

In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, priority will be given to ensuring that development proposals:

- (i) achieve an overall pattern of land uses which reduce the need to travel and support increased use of public transport, cycling and walking;
- (ii) promote the vitality and viability of local communities;
- (iii) conserve both the natural environment and cultural heritage of the District; and
- (iv) make effective use of land in urban areas, particularly on previously developed sites.

### **G2**

New development will be considered against the following criteria:

- (i) a satisfactory means of access and turning space within the site, where appropriate, together with parking in accordance with the guidance at Appendices V and VI of the Local Plan;
- (ii) avoidance of placing an undue burden on existing or proposed services and facilities, the existing or proposed local road network or other infrastructure;
- (iii) a minimum loss of disturbance to forestry land and the best and most versatile agricultural land, and avoid the severance of holdings;
- (iv) respect for existing beneficial landscape, ecological, archaeological or architectural features and include measures for the enhancement of such features and the landscaping of the site where appropriate;
- (v) avoidance of the loss of important open areas, a gap in a frontage or natural or built features (such as trees, hedges or other habitats, wall, fences and banks), which it is desirable to retain;
- (vi) avoidance of unduly disturbing, interfering, conflicting with or overlooking adjoining dwellings or uses to the detriment of existing occupiers;
- (vii) avoidance of locations which are liable to environmental problems due to their proximity to incompatible development;
- (viii) avoidance of detriment to public health or pollution to the environment by the emission of excessive noise, light intrusion, smoke, fumes, effluent or vibration; and incorporation of energy efficient design through building design, layout and orientation.

### **G3**

Development will not be permitted which would increase the requirement for water unless adequate resources already exist, or will be provided in time to serve the development, and without detriment to existing abstractions, water environment, both quality and quantity, fisheries, amenity or to nature conservation.

### **G5**

Development requiring water services will only be permitted where adequate water supplies, drainage, sewerage and sewage treatment facilities are available or where suitable arrangements are made for their provision. In sewered areas new development will be expected to connect to main drainage. New sewers will be expected to be constructed to a standard adoptable by the appropriate water company.

#### G9

Where as a direct consequence of a proposed development, additional infrastructure or facilities are required within a development site, the Local Planning Authority will seek to negotiate with the developer to secure an appropriate level of provision. Equally, contributions towards off-site infrastructure, education provision and other facilities, or measures to assist public transport, cyclists or pedestrians will also be sought where needed.

Planning permission will be refused for any proposal that does not make satisfactory provision for infrastructure or facilities which are directly required and necessary for the development to go ahead.

#### D1

Where as a direct consequence of a proposed development, additional infrastructure or facilities are required within a development site, the Local Planning Authority will seek to negotiate with the developer to secure an appropriate level of provision. Equally, contributions towards off-site infrastructure, education provision and other facilities, or measures to assist public transport, cyclists or pedestrians will also be sought where needed.

Planning permission will be refused for any proposal that does not make satisfactory provision for infrastructure or facilities which are directly required and necessary for the development to go ahead.

#### CN20

Development that would adversely affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument or other nationally important archaeological features, or their settings will not be permitted.

#### CN21

Where an application for development may affect a known or potential site of archaeological interest, as defined on the Plan as an Area of Special Archaeological Interest, the Local planning Authority will request an archaeological evaluation to be carried out before the planning application is determined.

#### CN22

The Local Planning Authority will also seek the preservation of archaeological remains that are of regional and local importance, whether they are currently known or discovered during the lifetime of the Plan and there will be a preference to preserve them in situ and to protect their settings.

Development that does not achieve acceptable mitigation of adverse archaeological effects will not

be permitted. Where development is permitted and preservation is not appropriate or possible, the Council will require suitable investigation and recording to take place. These measures will be sought by means of legal agreement or the use of conditions.

#### CN23

Within the historic settlements of Salisbury, Amesbury, Downton, Hindon, Mere, Old Sarum, Shrewton, Tilshead and Wilton, the Local Planning Authority will seek to establish, prior to determining planning applications, the archaeological implications of all development, will wish to be informed of all requirements for archaeological work, and will continue to seek the provision of adequate facilities for archaeological site investigation, particularly by use of agreements where appropriate, or by conditions on planning approvals where necessary.

#### CN24

Development that would adversely affect the archaeological landscape of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, or the fabric or setting of its monuments, will not be permitted.

#### C2

Development in the countryside will be strictly limited and will not be permitted unless it would benefit the local economy and maintain or enhance the environment.

#### C6

Within the Special Landscape Area, proposals for development in the countryside will be considered having particular regard to the high quality of the landscape. Where proposals which would not have an adverse effect on the quality of the landscape are acceptable, they will be subject to the following criteria;

- (i) the siting and scale of development to be sympathetic with the landscape; and
- (ii) high standards of landscaping and design, using materials which are appropriate to the locality and reflect the character of the area.

#### C8

in order to maintain the quality and variety of the countryside new development which would result in the loss of trees, hedges or other features that contribute to the character of the landscape will only be permitted where provision is made for replacement planting and the creation of new landscape features.

#### C13

Proposals for development which are acceptable under other policies in this Local Plan should retain and enhance as far as possible any existing value of the site as a wildlife habitat. Sympathetic siting of development, suitable planting and seeding, and appropriate site management will be required.

#### C12

Development which would have a significant detrimental effect on non-statutory sites or areas such as Areas of High Ecological Value, County Wildlife Sites, or other non-statutory sites which are of local rather than national or international wildlife or geological importance, will only be permitted where the importance of the development outweighs the local nature conservation interests present. Where permission is granted, conditions will be used to ensure that harm to wildlife or geological interests is minimised and to secure replacement value for any lost habitats or features. This will be particularly important where the habitat or species is subject to a Biodiversity Action Plan.

#### C17

The conservation and enhancement of the rivers and other watercourses, river corridors and associated wetlands will be promoted within the District.

#### C18

Planning permission will not be given for development which would adversely affect the water quality, amenity, visual quality or public enjoyment of a river or floodplain or its value as a wildlife habitat.

Approval will not be granted for the culverting of watercourses unless there is a demonstrable need for granting an exception

Bank protection works, which will only be permitted where property or statutory rights of way are threatened, should involve the use of appropriate materials and should protect nature conservation interests.

#### C19

The best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 & 3a) will be protected from development. Where either sufficient land in lower grades is unavailable, or lower-grade land has an environmental value recognised by a statutory landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations, the best and most versatile agricultural land may be used for development. If such land does need to be developed, and there is a choice between sites in different grades, development will be directed towards land of the lowest grade.

#### TR11

The provision of off-street car parking spaces, on the basis of the guidance given at Appendix V to this Local Plan, will be sought in respect of all new development proposals.

## TR12

Permission will not be granted for major new development unless provision is made in the layout for:

- (i) facilities giving priority to, and allowing access by, buses;
- (ii) cycleways and footpaths;
- (iii) direct and sustainable links to adjoining developments and urban centre, particularly those links giving priority to public transport, walking and cycling; and
- (iv) measures to achieve safe traffic speeds and secure a pleasant and safe environment.

## TR13

Proposals to improve and extend the footpath, cycleway and bridleway network will be permitted provided they:

- (i) are integrated with existing routes;
- (ii) take into account the needs of agriculture;
- (iii) are located and designed to reduce opportunities for criminal behaviour;
- (iv) have regard to the needs of people with impaired mobility; and
- (v) have regard to the needs of other users of the route and network.

## TR14

Secure bicycle parking spaces will be sought in new developments in a manner acceptable to the Local Planning Authority and in accordance with the guidelines given in Appendix VI.

## TR16

Existing bus and rail services should be retained and expanded where appropriate to provide an attractive alternative to the use of the car.

## R17

The Local Planning Authority will encourage the improvement and increased use of the public rights of way network. Proposals to close or divert existing rights of way will not be permitted unless an alternative route is available which is as attractive and is not significantly longer than the original route. Wherever possible, local extensions and improvements to rights of way will be sought as part of development proposals.

R18

The Local Planning Authority will, where it is considered appropriate, seek the expansion of public access to the countryside through the creation of new paths and publicly accessible areas and extensions to existing facilities.

T1

The development of new tourist attractions or facilities, or the improvement of existing tourist attractions or facilities, will be permitted within the physical limits of settlements.

T2

In the countryside, outside the New Forest, proposals for the development of new tourist attractions or the improvement of existing ones, will be considered against the following criteria:

(i) where a proposal affects a Site of Special Scientific Interest, an Area of High Ecological Value, a Scheduled Ancient Monument or an Area of Special Archaeological Significance, the development will be permitted only if there will be no adverse impact on the designated area;

(ii) within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Landscape Settings of Salisbury and Wilton, proposals will be permitted only where they are small in scale and would be compatible with the special landscape quality of the area;

(iii) otherwise proposals will be allowed provided they do not entail the erection of large buildings or structures.

T3

It is proposed that a new visitor centre will be provided for the Stonehenge World Heritage Site.

## Appendix 2

Relevant planning policies

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

Policy EN2 – Air quality

Policy RE1 – Water resources and water quality

Policy RE2 – Flood risk

Policy VIS2 - Principles for future development

Policy SS1- Regional spatial strategy

Policy SS3 – The sub-regional strategy

Policy EN1 – Landscape and biodiversity

Policy EN3 – The historic environment

Policy EC1 – Economic development

Policy TCS1 – Tourism

Policy RE5 – Management and transportation of waste

Policy TRAN2 – Strategic and Inter-Urban and Inter-Regional transport networks

Policy TCS2 – Culture, leisure and sport

The adopted Swindon and Wiltshire Structure plan which runs until 2016 contains the following policies relevant to this application -

DPI (Priorities for Sustainable Development)

DP2 (Infrastructure)

T2 (Public Passenger Transport)

T4 (Cycling and Walking)

T5 (Parking)

T7 (Transport Provision for New Developments)

T11 (A303 Stonehenge Transport improvements including Flyover at Countess Roundabout)

C1 (Maintenance and enhancement of nature conservation resources)

C2 (Protection of Areas of Nature)

C3 (Protection of Areas of Nature)

C5 (the water environment)

C9 (Special Landscape Area)

C12 (Protection of best agricultural land)

HE1 (Protection of the World Heritage Site)

HE5 (Protection of World Heritage Sites and scheduled ancient monuments)

HE7 (Safeguarding architectural and historic heritage)

RLT1 (Provision of recreation and leisure facilities)

RLT2 (Improving informal countryside recreation)

RLT8 (Proposals for new and improved tourist attractions)

W1 (Waste management; reducing, re-using and recovering waste)

W2 (Provision of recycling facilities)

At a local level consideration needs to be given to the saved policies of the adopted local plan. This is the Salisbury District Local Plan

Relevant saved policies include:

G1 (General principles for development)

G2 (General criteria for development)

G3 (Protection of the water environment)

G5 (Water supply and mains drainage to new development)

G9 (Planning obligations)

D1 (Design criteria)

CN20 (Ancient monuments and archaeology)

CN21 (Archaeological evaluation of development sites)

CN22 (Preservation of archaeological remains)

CN23 (Archaeological investigation prior to development)

CN24 (Protection of the World Heritage Site)  
C2 (Control of new development within the countryside)  
C6 (Special landscape Area)  
C8 (Replacement of landscape features lost during development)  
C13 (Retention and enhancement of existing wildlife habitat)  
C12 (Protected species)  
C17 (Conservation of river habitats)  
C18 (Protection of water quality)  
C19 (Protection of best agricultural land)  
TR11 (Off street car parking provision)  
TR12 (Transportation provision for new major developments)  
TR13 (Extension to footpath, cycleway and bridleway network)  
TR14 (Secure cycle parking)  
TR16 (Retention and expansion of existing bus and rail services)  
R17 (Improvement and increased use of public rights of way network)  
R18 (Expansion of public access to the countryside)  
T1 (Development of new tourist attractions)  
T2 (Development of new tourist attractions in the countryside)  
T3 (New visitor centre for Stonehenge).

Finally also to be considered are relevant policies of the Wiltshire and Swindon Waste and Minerals plans  
Those policies being –

The Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy – adopted July 2009  
The Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy – adopted July 2009  
The Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Development Control policies – adopted September 2009  
The Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Development Control policies – adopted September 2009

In addition to these documents there are a number of emerging documents that have a degree of weight in the planning decision. These are –

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West including policies -

Development Policy D – Infrastructure  
Development Policy E – High Quality Design  
Development Policy G – Sustainable construction  
ENV1 – Protecting and enhancing the Region's Natural and Historic Environment  
ENV4 – Nature conservation  
ENV5 – Historic Environment  
TO1 – Sustainable Tourism  
RTS 1 – Corridor Management  
RE5 – Decentralised energy to supply new development  
RE6 – Water resources  
W4 – Controlling, re-using and recycling waste in development

The emerging South Wiltshire Core Strategy including policy 13 which covers new visitor facilities in relation to Stonehenge.

National Planning guidance is contained within the following documents –

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable energy
- Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control
- Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Planning Policy Statement 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management
- Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport
- Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the historic environment
- Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and planning

- Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation
  - Planning Policy Guidance 24: Planning and Noise
- Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and flood risk

And circular 07/2009 The protection of world heritage sites

Other guidance for the consideration of this application is set out in

- Future Foundations: Building a Better South West - A Sustainable Construction Charter for the Region (Sustainability South West)
- A Sustainable Future for the South West: A Regional Sustainable Development for the South West of England (South West Regional Assembly/sustainability South West).
- Supplementary Planning Guidance for Waste Audits issued by Wiltshire County Council.
- Creating Places – design guide produced by the former Salisbury District Council.
- The Good practice guide on planning and tourism.

One of the most important documents in the consideration of the application is the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan. Wiltshire's cabinet has resolved to endorse the Stonehenge management plan as supplementary planning guidance and as such this provides the basis for determining any planning application.

Finally UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, scientific and Cultural Organisation) has a convention adopted in 1972 that seeks to protect the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This is the Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage. Unesco guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2008) explain this in more detail.

### Appendix 3 - Highways consultation response

Department for Transport, Environment & Leisure  
County Hall  
Bythesea Road  
Trowbridge  
Wiltshire  
BA14 8JN

Dear Adam

**Re: Planning Applications S/09/1528 (Listed Building Consent – Airmans Cross) and S/09/1527, Proposed new Stonehenge Visitor Centre, Airmans Corner, Winterbourne Stoke**

I refer to my consultation response letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> November, and the subsequent correspondence you have received from the Department. I apologise for any confusion caused as a result of conflicting requirements, and would ask that all previous correspondence be superseded by this letter. It hopefully addresses the inconsistencies in the transport and highways correspondence to date, and reflects the discussions at our recent (8<sup>th</sup> December) meeting with the applicant, the National Trust and the Highways Agency. In particular it clarifies the local highway authority position in relation to the proposals at Stonehenge Bottom, and future access to that part of the A344 which is to be subject to an application for a (s247) stopping-up order.

Having considered both of the above proposals, I make the following response to the consultation in respect of transport and highways considerations:

**S/09/1528 - Airmans Cross, LB Consent**

This proposal relates to the relocation of the Airmans Cross to a new site within the curtilage of the proposed Stonehenge Visitor Centre.

The proposal is fully supported by the highway authority. No objection is raised, if the arrangements are subject to a planning obligation to provide, inter alia, for i) the temporary storage of the cross ii) the proper cleaning and restoration prior to its relocation to the proposed site, and iii) an undertaking from English Heritage to maintain the Cross in good order whilst in their care. (Ownership of the Cross is uncertain, but there is a view that the Council, as highway authority has a claim to the Cross. It is recommended that the Cross be transferred into the care of English Heritage in perpetuity)

**My recommendation is:**

No objection subject to the consent being withheld until an appropriate planning agreement has been completed.

**S/09/1527 – Proposed Stonehenge Visitor Centre**

The proposal is supported in principle, but there are concerns that need to be addressed.

The County Council (and, by association, the highway authority) previously agreed in principle to the closure of the A344 to motorised vehicles in order to facilitate objectives of the Stonehenge Master Plan, and the provision of the proposed Visitor Centre. (Ref: Wiltshire County Council Cabinet Report 21<sup>st</sup> October 2008, Minutes appended hereto). In particular resolution numbers (ii) and (iv) guide this response.

The submitted Transport Assessment identifies the impacts associated with the closure of the A344, and I accept that the transport implications for the local highway network are not sufficient to warrant a recommendation of refusal, despite forecast increased traffic flows on the Packway. There will be added difficulties on the A303, especially on the link between Stonehenge Bottom and Longbarrow, but again these are not regarded as sufficient to justify a refusal of the application, given the benefits of junction improvements proposed at Longbarrow.

The proposal to provide a roundabout junction at Airmans Corner is supported. The proposed junction should materially improve safety at the junction, and there are no forecast capacity issues here.

There are several proposals on the drawings that require modification:

The gating of the A344 at the location shown (immediately to the east of the proposed roundabout) is not acceptable in road safety terms. Any gating arrangements will be covered under the provisions of a planning agreement, and will be required to ensure that vehicles confronted by a gate on the A344 can turn to approach the roundabout in forward gear.

The coach park exit onto the B3089 should be laid out so as to provide for, but not encourage, right turn movements. The current kerbing arrangement is overly engineered, and could encourage such movements.

I believe these two points can be addressed via detailed drawings to be approved under the provisions of a planning agreement

Access to the site by sustainable modes needs to be considered within the framework of the Stonehenge Management Plan. This access is currently poor, with the A303 to the south acting as a major severance. There are several policies which relate to sustainable access, the key ones are:

**“Policy 4d** Access and circulation to key archaeological sites within the WHS landscape should be encouraged (taking into account archaeological and ecological needs) to increase public awareness and enjoyment.

Action:

- Develop circular routes linking archaeological sites for walkers and cyclists”

**“Policy 5d** Measures should be taken through an exemplary Green Travel Plan to encourage access to the Site other than by car.

Actions:

- Develop a Green Transport Plan for the whole WHS.
- Encourage a decrease the % of visitors arriving at Stonehenge by car
- Produce a sustainable transport plan for the new visitor facilities covering access to and within the WHS
- Increase and promote public transport to Stonehenge and the WHS, in particular bus links from Salisbury train station
- Encourage cycling in the WHS and long distance cycling routes”.

The TA explains why a refuge (for pedestrians and cyclists) has not been proposed in the carriageway of the A303 at Stonehenge Bottom. However, pedestrians and cyclists will inevitably arrive (as they do now) at Stonehenge Bottom and need to cross the road at that point. There is scope to consider other measures which might include encouraging users of this route to cross at more appropriate points along the A303. The path from Old Stonehenge Road to Stonehenge Bottom is generally acceptable to accommodate the pedestrian and

cycle traffic that might be anticipated to use the route, although some minor changes in relation to precise crossing points need to be considered at detailed design stage. I suggest, below, a condition that allows for performance of any crossing arrangement to be assessed and monitored through established safety audit techniques.

Sustainable access to the WHS site as a whole must be addressed and agreed during this stage of the process as there will be a number of physical measures which must be undertaken, it will not be acceptable to leave it until the production of the Green Travel Plan. The following modifications to the existing rights of way and road network will be required in order to provide sustainable access to the visitor centre and the wider WHS:

- 1) The surfacing of Byway 12 from the A344 up to Fargo Road (Dealt with by condition below)
- 2) Upgrading of the National Trust permissive footpath between Byways 12 and 11 to Restricted Byway status (This issue is not appropriate to condition, but EH should be encouraged to accede to the request, in order to avoid potential conflict on the A303 between its junctions with the two byways).
- 3) An off-road cycle link beginning just south of the coach park exit on the east side of the B3086, passing round the corner and along the north side of the existing A344, finishing at the cycle parking. This would avoid cyclists bound for the B3086 having to negotiate the roundabout.\*
- 4) Bus stops on the A360 and connecting paths are required to facilitate passengers using those services unable to enter the site.\*

\* These issues will be addressed through the detailed drawings required under the provisions of the planning agreement

Securing future pedestrian and cycle access to that part of the A344 south east of Byway 12 will be dealt with in the planning agreement.

### **My recommendation is:**

No objection subject to:-

Consent being withheld until a planning agreement, generally in accordance with the travelling draft (available), has been completed, and the following conditions:

- Prior to the commencement of the development, details of the Visitor Transit System shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority; such details to demonstrate the efficacy of the turning and waiting facilities proposed, at both operational ends of the site, and in the overnight parking area.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed layout can properly accommodate the operational requirements of the VTS trains.

*Informative: The VTS will be running on a public highway. It must therefore comply with all necessary legislation related to such vehicles.*

- Notwithstanding the details of gating arrangements shown on the submitted drawings, the applicant shall, prior to the commencement of the development, obtain approval from the local planning authority to further detailed drawings showing how vehicles

accessing the A344 can turn around and return westbound in forward gear, including all points where access is restricted by proposed gating.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to avoid the inconvenience otherwise caused to larger vehicles that might need to gain access for highway maintenance or other purposes.

- Prior to the commencement of the development the applicant shall submit to and secure the approval of the local planning authority a scheme demonstrating how any gating or bollarding measures on the A344 are to be operated, their legal status, and what provisions are to be made for vehicles reasonably requiring access to the public highway and, beyond, to the stopped up section of A344 between Byway 12 and Stonehenge Bottom. Gating arrangements shall only be provided and operated in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To demonstrate that a managed scheme will allow for the requirements of all proper vehicular users of the highway at all times of the day and night throughout the year.

- Prior to the commencement of the development the applicant shall submit to and secure approval of the local planning authority to a scheme demonstrating how visitors during exceptional circumstances, such as summer solstice, will be accommodated, and afforded legal access to their temporary parking facilities via the A344. Parking arrangements shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure that local road congestion is not caused at the proposed Airmans Corner roundabout junction during exceptionally high levels of visitation, and in a circumstance where enforcement of a traffic regulation order could otherwise cause access difficulties.

- Development hereby permitted shall not commence until (i) details of the pedestrian and cycle route along the whole of the A344, including crossing arrangements at the A303 (Stonehenge Bottom) and (ii) a scheme for reviewing such access and crossing arrangements, have been submitted to and approved (in consultation with the Secretary of State for Transport) in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be occupied until the agreed works have been completed. Any changes shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To accommodate and facilitate the inevitable future local pedestrian and cyclist demand travelling the route between the Stones and west Amesbury, and provision of a safe crossing point on the A303 when the right turn facility currently in place is removed.

*Informative: For the avoidance of doubt, the scheme for reviewing the access and crossing arrangements shall have regard to Design Manual for Roads and Bridges HD19/03 Stage 4 Safety Audit 12 and 36 month post-scheme recommendations for remedial action. It shall detail how recommended remedial action will be funded and implemented, including arrangements to provide for alternative crossing points on the A303 and associated access links.*

- Before the proposed visitor centre is open for public use, the developer shall upgrade the surface of Byway 12 between the A344 and the Sustrans National Cycle Route 45.

Reason: In order to facilitate the objectives of the travel planning requirements for the site insofar as they relate to encouraging pedestrian and cycle transport.

- Prior to the commencement of the development, a scheme and programme for cycle parking and storage provision at the western and eastern end of the retained highway A344 shall be submitted for approval to the local planning authority. The facilities shall be provided in accordance with the approved scheme and programme.

Reason: In order to facilitate the objectives of the travel planning requirements for the site insofar as they relate to encouraging pedestrian and cycle transport, and to discourage random parking of cycles within the vicinities of the Stones and the proposed Visitor Centre.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Tilley  
Head of Service  
Transport Development

Direct Line: 01225 713441  
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109. **Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan and Environmental Improvements**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Environmental Services in relation to the most recent proposals for Stonehenge put forward by English Heritage and which requested agreement of the County Council's response to the consultation.

Additional correspondence from Mr West, County Councillor, Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council and Durrington Town Council were also circulated to members.

The Leader referred to the consultation event that had been held in Amesbury at which English Heritage had presented their detailed proposals. The consensus from that meeting was that sites X and Y, as referred to within the plan circulated with the officer's report, were preferred and there was little, if any, support for sites W or Z.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Economic Development moved the recommendations contained within the report and suggested that site X should be put forward as the preferred option. This was the closest site to the actual Stones themselves and would reduce the demand for park and ride facilities. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the Council would continue to press the Government for improvements to the A303.

The Cabinet Member for Culture agreed that sites X and Y were the strongest candidates but pointed out that site X was the most archaeologically sensitive site. If this site were chosen as the preferred option it would be important that archaeological matters were considered with regard to the specific location of the visitor centre within the overall site.

The Cabinet Member for Staffing and Customer Care spoke as local Member for the Durrington and Bulford electoral division. As far as the residents of Larkhill were concerned they could not support a visitor centre at site W as this would be directly adjacent to a working farm and residential houses.

The Leader agreed that site X should be put forward as the preferred option but also suggested that the campaign for improvements to the A303 should be continued with Government.

Mr West the local member for the Wilton and Wylve electoral division referred to his letter dated 14 October 2008 and the enclosure which had been circulated to members of the Cabinet. The enclosure was the report of the Public Inquiry into the A303 Stonehenge Improvement which concluded that the closure of the A344 independently of the proposed improvement of the A303 would not be justifiable and that it would lead to increased congestion on the A303 and elsewhere within the local road system. He emphasised that nothing had changed since then and local people would feel let down if the closure of the A344 proceeded without the associated improvements to the A303.

It was acknowledged that the Highways Agency probably would have the power to close the junction at Stonehenge Bottom without the prior consent of the County Council.

In response the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Economic Development pointed out that the closure of the A344 would make the pressure on the A303 more obvious and highlight the problems.

**Resolved:**

**(i) To support the Objectives and Aims of the Management Plan, particularly Aim 7, and to adopt the relevant parts as a Supplementary Planning Document in due course.**

**(ii) To support the Stonehenge Environmental Improvements, with Option 3A (site X) being the preferred site for the new visitor facilities subject to archaeological considerations being taken into account before the specific location within that site is agreed.**

**(iii) To agree that whilst site X would minimise the need for park and ride facilities, English Heritage be asked to consider a park and ride service for those visitors who wished to use it, from the final location chosen for the visitor facilities to a drop off point at the existing Stonehenge car park.**

**(iv) To raise no objection to the closure of the A303/A344 junction at Stonehenge Bottom, together with the closure of the A344 from Stonehenge Bottom to Byway 12 subject to junction improvements at the A303/A360 Longbarrow Roundabout and A360/A344/B3086 Airman's Corner.**

**(v) To advertise Traffic Regulation Orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 prohibiting motorised vehicles from using the A344 between Airman's Corner and Byway Amesbury 12 and byways within the World Heritage Site at the appropriate time.**

**(vi) To remind English Heritage of UNESCO's concern that no progress has been made with the implementation of the A303 Stonehenge Improvement, the need to find an appropriate solution compatible with the Outstanding Universal Value of Stonehenge and to ask for English Heritage's support to achieve the required improvements.**

**(vii) To send a copy of the Council response to the consultation to the Minister for Transport stressing the need to solve the problems of the A303 in the vicinity of Stonehenge, reluctantly accepting the closure of the A344 and stating the Council's intention to monitor the local road network for adverse effects.**

### **Reason For Proposal**

The Stonehenge WHS Management Plan needs to be revised to reflect changing circumstances. The present visitor facilities at Stonehenge are inadequate. New facilities would provide better interpretation of the WHS along with a café, a larger shop and improved visitor amenities. All the options for the site of the new facilities have advantages and disadvantages but on balance, the preferred options are those indicated.

The closure of the A303/A344 junction at Stonehenge Bottom and the A344 as far as Byway 12 would bring substantial improvements to the environment of Stonehenge and would reunite the monument with the ancient processional Avenue. The closure of the junction would also improve road safety, provided that improvements were made at the Longbarrow Roundabout and Airmen's Corner.

## **Appendix 5** Consultee response from spatial planning

**Proposal:** S/2009/1527/FULL – 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.

**Location:** Airmans Corner, land south east of the junction of the A360 and A344, Salisbury and land south east of the junction of the A360 and A344 near Shrewton/Larkhill, Salisbury.

### **1. Background**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires this application to be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Planning System is a plan led one and there must be a rigorous analysis of the proposals to test whether they are in accordance with the development plan. Only then should all other material considerations be taken into account to evaluate the suitability of the proposals.

If any application is contrary to policy then they should properly be refused unless other material considerations raise exceptional circumstances that merit setting them aside. Similarly if the application can be demonstrated to comply with policy then this introduces a strong presumption to recommend approval for the proposals unless again that is outweighed by other material planning issues.

### **2. The Current Development Plan**

#### **2.1 Regional Planning Guidance 10**

This is the current RSS and forms part of the development plan for the purposes of determining planning applications in the South West until replaced by the emerging RSS. It has statutory force under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Relevant policies include:

- Policy EN2 – Air quality
- Policy RE1 – Water resources and water quality
- Policy RE2 – Flood risk
- Policy VIS2 - Principles for future development
- Policy SS1- Regional spatial strategy
- Policy SS3 – The sub-regional strategy
- Policy EN1 – Landscape and biodiversity
- Policy EN3 – The historic environment
- Policy EC1 – Economic development
- Policy TCS1 – Tourism
- Policy RE5 – Management and transportation of waste
- Policy TRAN2 – Strategic and Inter-Urban and Inter-Regional transport networks
- Policy TCS2 – Culture, leisure and sport

#### **2.2 Swindon and Wiltshire Structure Plan 2016**

The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 was adopted in 2006 and will eventually be replaced by the new South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the Structure Plan was only in place until April 2009. However, an application was made to the Secretary of State to 'save' those policies that need to be retained until the new RSS and/ or a new Wiltshire Core Strategy is in place. Of those saved policies, those relevant to this proposal include:

- DPI (Priorities for Sustainable Development)
- DP2 (Infrastructure)
- T2 (Public Passenger Transport)
- T4 (Cycling and Walking)

T5 (Parking)  
 T7 (Transport Provision for New Developments)  
 T11 (A303 Stonehenge Transport improvements including Flyover at Countess Roundabout)  
 C1 (Maintenance and enhancement of nature conservation resources)  
 C2 (Protection of Areas of Nature)  
 C3 (Protection of Areas of Nature)  
 C5 (the water environment)  
 C9 (Special Landscape Area)  
 C12 (Protection of best agricultural land)  
 HE1 (Protection of the World Heritage Site)  
 HE5 (Protection of World Heritage Sites and scheduled ancient monuments)  
 HE7 (Safeguarding architectural and historic heritage)  
 RLT1 (Provision of recreation and leisure facilities)  
 RLT2 (Improving informal countryside recreation)  
 RLT8 (Proposals for new and improved tourist attractions)  
 W1 (Waste management; reducing, re-using and recovering waste)  
 W2 (Provision of recycling facilities)

### **2.3 Salisbury District Local Plan (adopted June 2003)**

The Salisbury District Local Plan 2011 was adopted in June 2003. In September 2007, most of the policies were 'saved'. They will remain in place until replaced by policies in new DPDs, particularly the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Relevant saved policies include:

G1 (General principles for development)  
 G2 (General criteria for development)  
 G3 (Protection of the water environment)  
 G5 (Water supply and mains drainage to new development)  
 G9 (Planning obligations)  
 D1 (Design criteria)  
 CN20 (Ancient monuments and archaeology)  
 CN21 (Archaeological evaluation of development sites)  
 CN22 (Preservation of archaeological remains)  
 CN23 (Archaeological investigation prior to development)  
 CN24 (Protection of the World Heritage Site)  
 C2 (Control of new development within the countryside)  
 C6 (Special landscape Area)  
 C8 (Replacement of landscape features lost during development)  
 C13 (Retention and enhancement of existing wildlife habitat)  
 C12 (Protected species)  
 C17 (Conservation of river habitats)  
 C18 (Protection of water quality)  
 C19 (Protection of best agricultural land)  
 TR11 (Off street car parking provision)  
 TR12 (Transportation provision for new major developments)  
 TR13 (Extension to footpath, cycleway and bridleway network)  
 TR14 (Secure cycle parking)  
 TR16 (Retention and expansion of existing bus and rail services)  
 R17 (Improvement and increased use of public rights of way network)  
 R18 (Expansion of public access to the countryside)  
 T1 (Development of new tourist attractions)  
 T2 (Development of new tourist attractions in the countryside)  
 T3 (New visitor centre for Stonehenge).

### **2.4 Wiltshire and Swindon Waste and Minerals Plans**

The Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy – adopted July 2009  
 The Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy – adopted July 2009  
 The Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Development Control policies – adopted September 2009  
 The Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Development Control policies – adopted September 2009

## **2.5 Analysis of the Proposals in relation to the Development Plan - Principle**

Broadly the development plan policies relevant to this application can be divided into two categories; those which relate to the fundamental principle of allowing the development and then those which seek to control any development so that environmental protection is ensured and the social and technical infrastructure to support it are in place.

### ***The Principle of Development***

Key policy considerations are expressed in policies C2 and T3 of the Salisbury Local Plan (2003) and policy C12 of the Wiltshire Structure Plan.

### ***Saved Local Plan Policy C2***

***“Development in the countryside will be strictly limited and will not be permitted unless it would benefit the local economy and enhance the environment.”***

### ***Saved Local Plan Policy T3***

***“It is proposed that a new visitor centre will be provided for the Stonehenge World Heritage Site.”***

### ***Saved Structure Plan C12***

***“Local Planning Authorities will protect the best and most versatile agricultural landform non-agricultural development. Exceptionally, where there is an overriding need for development on best and most versatile agricultural land, which cannot be met elsewhere.”***

## **Saved Local Plan Policy C2**

C2 states that development in the countryside will be "strictly limited" unless it benefits the local economy and maintains or enhances the local environment. The supporting text (para. 7.6) makes it clear that exceptions can be made to this policy of constraint including for "limited" recreational and tourist development. The exceptional, unique nature of this project is that it is designed to enhance the World Heritage Site which is of international importance.

To comply with this policy the planning application must comply with both of the criteria of benefiting the local economy and maintaining/enhancing the environment.

- **Benefiting the Local Economy**

Chapter 13 of the Environmental Statement accompanying the planning application considers in detail the socio-economic effects of the scheme. It is estimated that the new visitor facilities at Stonehenge will directly support 64.4 FTE operational staff by 2014/15 (see Table 13.8). In terms of indirect employment effects, it is estimated that the new visitor facility will support a further 49.2 FTE. Table 13.9 summaries the direct, indirect and induced employment effects.

The ES concludes that the scheme will have no significant adverse impacts on the socio-economic conditions. The assessment has demonstrated that during the construction phase, the Scheme would have a minor beneficial effect on the local economy. The operational effects of the Scheme are considered to be moderately beneficial to the local and regional economy. The new visitor facilities would play an important role for local schools and adult learning groups, with dedicated educational space available. The scheme would also play a significant role for the wider region as a key visitor gateway and “hook” to attract visitors to stay longer in Wiltshire, and in the South West region as a whole. These wider effects, which stem from the investment in the new visitor facilities, would be of major benefit for Wiltshire and the South West region, and contribute to sustaining and enhancing the region’s visitor economy.

Therefore, on the first test it is considered that there are definite and tangible economic benefits that this scheme will deliver, and in this respect, the scheme complies with Local Plan Policy C2.

- **Maintaining / Enhancing the Local Environment**

It is important to take a balanced look at the overall aims of this scheme. While the scheme leads to new development at Airman’s Corner, it is also leading to the removal of both the A344 and the existing

facilities immediately adjacent to Stonehenge within the central core of the World Heritage Site. This can only be considered a net gain in environmental terms. The removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century incursion so close to Stonehenge will contribute to returning the Scheduled Ancient Monument to a more respectful setting fitting of its international status and value.

Furthermore the design and lay out of the facilities are of an extremely high quality and subtle design, which seeks to keep their impact minimal. Therefore with regard to the second key test the application is considered compliant with policy C2.

### **Saved Local Plan Policy T3**

Policy T3 clearly identifies that the provision of a new visitor centre for the Stonehenge World Heritage Site is an objective which will be supported by the council. This policy when considered in conjunction with policy C2 examined above brings the logical conclusion that the application is in compliance with the Local Plan.

### **Structure Plan Policy C12**

The final point of principle is that with the Wiltshire Structure Plan, policy C12, which basically states that the best agricultural land needs to be protected from development. The 'best and most versatile land' is classified as grades 1,2,and 3. The construction of the new visitor facilities at Airman's Corner will result in the loss of 6.7 ha of agricultural land, which includes 2.7 ha classified as best and most versatile agricultural land (sub-grade 3a). The supporting text with the policy makes it clear that this land should only be developed if there is an overriding need that cannot be met elsewhere. The need for a new visitor centre to serve Stonehenge has long been accepted as an exceptional need as expressed through policy T3 of the Salisbury Local Plan and the unequivocal injurious impact the existing visitor facilities have on the Monument and its wider setting.

The exceptional need for the new visitor centre being established, it must be examined whether alternative sites are available that would help safeguard the best agricultural land. The detailed analysis of site selection and consideration of alternatives is contained in section 3 of the Environmental Statement. In summary, the preferred options are considered to be an optimal response to the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2009 policies for conserving and enhancing the outstanding universal value of the WHS, while maximizing opportunities for improved understanding and enjoyment for all visitors. The environmental assessment of alternative sites is compelling and taking a view of all land use constraints the Airman's Corner site does emerge in planning terms as the most acceptable site.

The Airman's Corner site was selected as the preferred site as it would:

- Minimise as far as practicable adverse impact on the WHS, its setting and the attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value;
- Minimise as far as practicable adverse impacts on the character of the landscape;
- Avoid constraining opportunities for improvements to the setting of Stonehenge and other monuments and sites in the WHS landscape as far as practicable;
- Make use of land which has been previously disturbed by development – the section of the B3086 to be removed;
- Make use of existing infrastructure so enabling new infrastructure (including access roads and transit routes) within the WHS to be kept to a practical minimum.

Therefore in relation to policy C12 the proposals are considered to accord with its provisions as exceptional need that cannot be elsewhere has been demonstrated.

## **2.6 Conclusions on Principle of Development**

The environmental and economic benefits to be gained, together with the lack of feasible alternatives all lead to the unavoidable conclusion that this planning application is in accordance with those provisions of the development plan, which will permit the principle of development.

## **2.7 Analysis of Proposals in relation to Development Plan: Detail**

Although the principle of this proposal in this specific location is in accordance with the Development Plan, as the supporting text to Policy T3 makes clear any scheme submitted will not automatically be considered acceptable and other policies of the development plan will need to be taken into account when evaluating its acceptability. Many of the policies listed above as being relevant to this application will be applied to specific facets of the application (e.g. access, landscape, sustainability etc) under the assessment of key planning issues. In considering each of the policy issues that follow, it should be borne in mind that there may be some overlap between similar issues under different policy groupings, particular those of the General Development Policies.

### General Development Policies

RPG10, policies VIS2, SS1, SS3

Wiltshire Structure Plan, policies DPI and DP2

Salisbury Local Plan, policies G, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G9

These policies set out general criteria that planning applications should meet. In summary these criteria involve ensuring that development contributes to the objectives of sustainability, promote the vitality and viability of local communities, conserve both the natural and built environments, minimise environmental impacts and are supported by necessary infrastructure.

In summary, it is considered the scheme complies with the requirements of these policies. For example, it will contribute towards sustainability objectives through a number of measures, including the use of local, recyclable and renewable materials wherever possible. A sustainable, low-energy approach to heating and cooling allows a significant reduction in energy use and carbon emissions. Subject to Environment Agency approval, water supply will be drawn from the aquifer, a local and renewable resource. The Airman's Corner site will use on-site water collection and treatment for sustainability and to avoid intrusive trenching for connections to water and sewer mains.

The proposals also promote sustainable modes of transport, including provision for cyclists, pedestrians and public buses.

### Design

Salisbury Local Plan, policies D1, D7

These policies require high quality design which respects the wider setting and is based on a concept that draws on the unique character of its context should be brought forward.

The design of the new facilities minimises both visual intrusion in the landscape and below ground disturbance of archaeology, whilst creating an accessible and legible layout for visitors. The design of the Visitor Centre is deferential to the Stones, relating in height to the tallest Trilithons and avoiding obvious visual references to the monuments. The curved canopy mimics the undulating landscape of the site and creates a sense of openness to the building, embracing the wide, open landscape context. The north pod of the Visitor Centre is glazed, continuing a visual link to the external landscape, while other materials have been selected to minimize visual impact and complement the colours of the surrounding landscape.

The landscape proposals are designed to retain the character of the dry valley and open chalk downland landscape. The car park follows the natural topography of the site, minimising visual impact without the need for intrusive and inappropriate screen planting. New tall planting is grouped with existing tall planting and used to screen the most visually intrusive element of the scheme, the coach park.

### Conservation

RPG10, policies EN3, EC1

Wiltshire Structure Plan, policies HE1, HE5, HE7

Salisbury Local Plan, policies, CN20, CN21, CN22, CN23, CN24

The objective of these policies is to seek to protect those features, sites and settlements of the historical, architectural and archaeological interest which contribute to the District's and nation's character, whilst ensuring that where new development occurs, it respects and wherever possible, enhances the environment within which it is located.

Section 5 of the Environmental Statement considers the scheme in detail in terms of archaeology and the historic environment. Removing the A344 and existing facilities, and returning the area to grass, will return the Stones to a more respectful setting. As referred to above, the Airman's Corner site was selected as the preferred site as it minimizes as far as practicable adverse impacts on the World Heritage Site, its setting and character of the landscape.

#### The Natural and Rural Environment and Economy

RPG 10, policies EN1, EC1

Wiltshire Structure Plan, policies C2, C3, C5, C9, C12

Salisbury Local Plan, policies, C1, C2, C6, C8, C10, C13, C12, C17, C18, C19

Collectively these policies seek to strike a balance between preserving and enhancing the quality and character of the countryside in terms of the landscape and nature conservation, promoting a healthy, modern and sustainable rural economy and ensuring a high quality of life for rural communities. These policies also seek to protect and enhance the region's internationally important landscape areas, sustain economic growth, and maintain and enhance environmental and cultural assets to attract and develop business activity.

The Scheme will play a significant role for the wider region as a key visitor gateway and 'hook' to attract visitors to stay longer in Wiltshire, and in the South West region as a whole. These wider effects, which stem from the investment in the New Visitor Facilities, would be of major benefit for Wiltshire and the South West region, and contribute to sustaining and enhancing the region's visitor economy.

Overall, the Environmental Impact Assessment has demonstrated that the Scheme would have no significant adverse impacts on nature conservation and biodiversity. The risk of adverse impacts on the River SSSI and River Avon SAC would be mitigated through careful construction methods set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan, and by implementation of an Ecological Monitoring and Management Plan to guide sensitive ongoing management of the New Visitor Facilities site.

Access by visitors to the World Heritage Site landscape would be managed through a Visitor Management Strategy that would be designed to limit disturbance to ground nesting breeding birds, bat roosts, brown hare, calcareous grasslands and invertebrates. There would be no significant loss of existing calcareous grassland (along short sections of roadside verge), which would be limited compared to the much larger new areas of grassland that would be created.

The assessment has demonstrated that restoration of the landscape to grass, combined with the closure of the A344 to motorized traffic, would achieve substantial benefits for the character and quality of the landscape around Stonehenge over a wide area. It would deliver similar benefits for the visual amenity of recreational users and those visiting the Stones, including improvements to the view of Stonehenge. While clearly the development of new visitor facilities at Airman's Corner will adversely impact on the landscape character and quality and visual amenity, this must be balanced with the positives of this scheme.

#### Transportation

RPG10 policies TRAN2

Wiltshire Structure Plan, policies T2, T4, T5, T7, T11

Salisbury Local Plan, policies, TR11, TR12, TR13, TR14, TR16

The underpinning idea of these policies is to seek a sustainable transportation and land use strategy which minimises the need to travel, reduces reliance on the private vehicle and encourages greater use of public transport, walking and cycling, whilst providing good accessibility and promoting economic vitality within the district.

The proposals promote sustainable modes of transport, including provision for cyclists, pedestrians and public buses. Appropriate changes to local road junctions will ensure that the transport network can accommodate the impact of the development. Transport infrastructure and vehicle movements are contained at the perimeter of the WHS, adjacent to the existing A360, maximising the extent of tranquil landscape.

Various measures for encouraging visitors to arrive by more sustainable means of transport such as cycle, public transport, foot and car sharing are outlined in chapter 5 of the Travel Plan. In summary, the key measures will be to appoint a member of staff as Travel Plan Coordinator, provide more information to the public regarding alternative ways of reaching the Visitor Centre and for the possible introduction of reduced ticket prices for those visitors arriving by bicycle, foot or public transport to be considered.

The Stonehenge Environmental Improvements Project incorporates several other proposals intended to achieve the aims of the World Heritage Site Management Plan and enable the delivery of the application scheme.

The A344 between Stonehenge Bottom and Byway 12 will be stopped up which will enhance the setting of Stonehenge and improve the visitor experience. This stopping up will require the closure of the A344/A303 junction and remodeling of the A303 in this location. Improvements to the A303/A360 (Longbarrow roundabout) will also be necessary.

A section of the B3086 north of the existing Airman's Corner junction will be realigned to facilitate the new roundabout junction arrangements (A303/A360 junction). Access by motorized vehicles on the A344 between Byway 12 and Airman's Corner will be restricted with exemptions for specified farm vehicles, emergency vehicles, the visitor transit vehicles and maintenance/security vehicles. Similarly, access on nearby Byways 11 and 12 (details in Design and Access Statement) for motorized vehicles will also be restricted.

One of the aims of World Heritage Management Plan 2009 is to prohibit the use of Byways in the World Heritage site by motorised vehicles (except emergency, agricultural, essential maintenance, security and operational vehicles). Wiltshire Council will make a TRO to create necessary restrictions.

#### Tourism

RPG10 policy TCS1

Wiltshire Structure Plan, policies RLT1, RLT2, RLT8

Salisbury Local Plan, policies, T1, T2, T3

The overall objective of this part of the development plan is to promote south Wiltshire as a tourist destination for all types of visitors, whilst recognising the need to protect the environmental quality of the District and the quality of life for its residents.

The Airman's Corner site will provide improved facilities appropriate for a World Heritage Site and international tourist attraction, in line with the requirements of with the World Heritage Site Management Plan.

The current visitor facilities are inadequate and opportunities for interpretation and education within World Heritage site are constrained. The proposed new visitor centre will incorporate education, learning and interpretation facilities, ticketing, information, café and souvenir shop. The facilities will also include an outdoor interpretation area including recreations of Neolithic houses based on recent archaeological discoveries at Durrington Walls.

#### Waste and Recycling

RPG10 policies RE5, RE6

Wiltshire Structure Plan, policies W1, W2

The Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Local Plan, policies 10, 14

These policies seek to ensure waste is managed in a manner that seeks to protect the environment for current and future generations.

### **2.8 Conclusions on detail - The Development Plan**

It is therefore considered that, as well as being acceptable in principle when assessed against the Development Plan, the proposal also complies with the detailed requirements of the Development Plan policies.

### **3.0 Emerging Development Plan**

Whilst the current development plan comprises those documents listed above, the emerging Core Strategy for south Wiltshire and RSS for the south west, once adopted, will replace these documents as the new development plan. Whilst these documents are not yet part of the statutory development plan, given their advanced nature, they hold significant weight and must be considered in the assessment of this proposal.

### **3.1 Emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West**

Work on the new RSS has advanced to Proposed Changes by the Secretary of State, although there is currently no timetable for adoption of final RSS. Given the advanced stage of preparation, considerable weight can be given to Secretary of State's proposed changes. Once adopted, this will replace the current RPG10.

Relevant emerging RSS policies include:

Development Policy D – Infrastructure  
Development Policy E – High Quality Design  
Development Policy G – Sustainable construction  
ENV1 – Protecting and enhancing the Region's Natural and Historic Environment  
ENV4 – Nature conservation  
ENV5 – Historic Environment  
TO1 – Sustainable Tourism  
RTS 1 – Corridor Management  
RE5 – Decentralised energy to supply new development  
RE6 – Water resources  
W4 – Controlling, re-using and recycling waste in development

### 3.2 Emerging South Wiltshire Core Strategy

The emerging Core Strategy for South Wiltshire was submitted to the Secretary of State on 16 November, so whilst not yet an adopted plan, it has made significant progress and gives a strong indication of the direction of planning policy in south Wiltshire to 2026.

Within the Amesbury Community Area of the emerging Core Strategy, key issues include the need to identify a lasting solution for Stonehenge regarding adjacent roads and the cramped visitor centre; the limited visitor spin off benefits from Stonehenge for Amesbury and the surrounding areas; and the need for the dualling of the A303(T) alongside a bypass for Winterbourne Stoke.

The vision for the area includes working with English Heritage and The National Trust to realize a lasting solution for Stonehenge, which returns the monument to a setting more respectful of its status as an international icon.

Emerging Core Strategy Policy 13 is of particular relevance to this proposal, and states:

***New Visitor facilities will be permitted where they:***

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

Strategic Objective 6 of the Core Strategy is "to enhance south Wiltshire's place as a retail centre that offers something different from the mainstream and to establish tourism as a major sector of the economy. One of the desired outcomes of this objective is to develop a new, world class visitor centre."

### 3.3 Analysis of proposals in relation to emerging Development Plan

As with the current saved Local Plan Policy T3, emerging Core Policy 13 establishes that the principle of new visitor facilities at Stonehenge is supported subject to meeting the 5 criteria listed in the policy. These criteria, along with the policy requirements set out in the emerging RSS, can be summarised as follows:

- Infrastructure - New development to be supported by infrastructure
- High quality design - In terms of urban form and sustainability criteria
- Sustainable Construction
- Natural and Historic Environment - To be protected and enhanced. Priority to preservation and enhancement of sites of international or national landscape, geological, archaeological or historic importance.
- Nature conservation - Distinctive habitats and species of South West to be maintained. Protection and enhancement of region's network of ground, surface and coastal waters and associated ecosystems.
- Sustainable tourism and the economy/ Realising the potential of cultural and heritage assets /

- Decentralised energy to supply new development
- Waste - Controlling, re-using and recycling waste in development.

These issues are very similar to the requirements of the current Development Plan policies, and have already been considered above. As such, it is not necessary to repeat these considerations here and it is considered that the proposals are in compliance with the emerging Development Plan policies.

#### **4.0 Other Material Planning Considerations**

Having tested the proposal against both the development plan, and the emerging development plan, it is also necessary to consider all other material considerations and planning policy guidance at a local, national and international level.

##### **4.1 Local Material Planning Considerations** ***Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan***

The Government has made it clear that the revised Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan provides the framework within which the Project must be implemented. On 15 July 2009 Wiltshire Council's Cabinet resolved to "endorse 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." As such, the revised Management Plan 2009 provides the overarching guidance and policy context for the development of the Project.

The Project will help deliver the Vision for the WHS that is set out in the revised Management Plan 2009. It will enhance the visitor experience by providing improved New Visitor Facilities and interpretation, which will assist in achieving a number of the revised Management Plan's aims related to conservation of the WHS, sustainable tourism and visitor management, and sustainable traffic management and transportation.

The Management Plan represents the Government's recognition of this obligation under the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Convention and summarises proposals to prevent damage to Stonehenge and its setting and to ensure its survival for future generations. The Management Plan also goes far beyond the obligation and crystallizes the Government's vision as originally set out in the Stonehenge Master Plan for the enhancement of the World Heritage Site and Stonehenge.

The Management Plan has been prepared following guidelines prepared by the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS): the expert body that advises UNESCO in providing objectives for the future management of the Site. In accordance with ICOMOS guidelines, the Management Plan has been drafted to establish a strategic framework for management based on analysis of the Sites significance.

The Management Plan identifies and acknowledges the importance of a wide range of mechanisms, both statutory and non-statutory, which already exist for the protection and/or management of the World Heritage Site. In this way it co-ordinates all of these instruments into one document in a manner that will provide an invaluable source of reference and cohesive cross-organisational approaches. Therefore the Management Plan includes the statutory planning policy framework, which exists to protect and manage the World Heritage Site as well as the roles of many organisations and individuals who are actively involved in managing the landscape. In this manner the Plan provides guidelines to direct management towards clear priorities and helps to encourage and enable others to take similar action. Furthermore this partnership approach helps to ensure that objectives defined in the Plan are achievable given the constraints of law and practices carried on within the World Heritage Site.

##### ***Supplementary Planning Guidance for Waste Audits***

Adopted by Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council in March 2005.

This SPG specifically buttresses policies 10 and 14 of the Wiltshire Structure Plan and seeks to ensure that from the outset, new development is implemented with the principle of sustainable development at its core. It encourages the optimum use of resources through the demolition and construction process and for the waste resources generated by occupation and operation to be captured at source.

Specifically it requires that all new development be subject to a waste audit prior to commencement, which will establish volumes of waste the facility will produce and then identify opportunities for recycling and more efficient consumption. Section 22, page 51 of this report examines the sustainable credentials of the proposed building in detail.

## **Minerals and Waste**

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Waste Audits (Policy 10) and Provision for Recycling in New and Refurbished Developments (Policy 14) was adopted by the former Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council in March 2005, at the same time as the adoption of the Waste Local Plan (WLP).

The SPG provides advice to applicants for planning permission about how to comply with Policy 10 of the Waste Local Plan, by carrying out audits of waste generated by their development proposals. The guidance emphasises the need to minimise, re-use and recycle waste. Similarly, applicants are advised about how to comply with Policy 14, by incorporating facilities to encourage recycling of waste by the occupiers of their proposed developments.

**These two policies apply to all forms of development, subject to thresholds to exclude relatively minor schemes.**

## ***Creating Places***

This was produced by the former Salisbury District Council and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, which has been “saved” and is a south Wiltshire-wide design guide.

Creating Places supplements the design policies in the development plan and sets out detailed design criteria to both help developers achieve high quality designs appropriate to their specific context and criteria against which the council will scrutinise applications. The underpinning principles of the guide are that of removing some of the subjectivity regarding what constitutes good design, by adopting classically derived and government adopted criteria for appraising schemes (see Commission of the Built Environment). It also emphasises the need above all of securing designs which reflect the unique characteristics of any given place and do not seek standardised solutions. Applications must be accompanied by an adequate design statement which highlights the intellectual design concept for the proposals, including how it responds to the vernacular context.

The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application highlights in detail the philosophy and inspiration behind the scheme and is considered an appropriate one.

## 4.2 National and Regional Material Planning Considerations

National government policy on planning matters is expressed in Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) or Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).

The guiding ideology that underpins all Government guidance is that decisions on development proposals should be based on sustainable development principles, ensuring an integrated approach to the consideration of:

- Social inclusion, recognising the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection and enhancement of the environment;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Of particular relevance to this planning application is the following guidance:

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable energy
- Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control
- Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Planning Policy Statement 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management
- Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport

- Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the historic environment
- Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and planning
- Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation
- Planning Policy Guidance 24: Planning and Noise
- Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and flood risk

Key regional Planning Guidance is contained in:

- Future Foundations: Building a Better South West - A Sustainable Construction Charter for the Region (Sustainability South West)
- A Sustainable Future for the South West: A Regional Sustainable Development for the South West of England (South West Regional Assembly/sustainability South West).

As with the analysis of the development plan carried out above, the principle of the planning application may be evaluated against national guidance, as well as specific details.

***Is the Principle of Development Supported?***

Turning to the question of the principle of development, government and regional planning guidance is aimed at securing sustainable patterns of development, which are inclusive, environmentally sensitive, utilise natural resources prudently and contribute to economic growth and employment.

With regard to issues of sustainability and environmental protection, the principle of creating a visitor centre on the Airman's Corner site represents the most acceptable solution in terms of maintaining the integrity of the World Heritage Site. Furthermore and in line with PPS7, the selected site is in close proximity to Amesbury town centre, which would enable opportunities for local services and businesses to generate income from visitors exploring the area. Additional economic growth would be accrued from additional expenditure on goods and services by English Heritage and other organisations involved in the operation of the visitor centre, and the increase in average dwell times of the attraction will encourage visitors to make a day of their visit and hence increase the likelihood of a combined visit to Amesbury or Salisbury. It is considered that there are definite and tangible economic benefits that this scheme will deliver meaning in this respect the application complies with national and regional guidance.

In terms of social inclusion, the application does seek to address the needs of all sectors of society. A statement of community engagement shows that the applicants have made extensive arrangements for engaging with all groups including local residents, stakeholders and interest groups. The scheme includes measures to try and cater for the needs of all to provide equality of experience for all visitors through, for example, assisted access options to the Stonehenge monument. The proposed access arrangements make provision for assisted access to the Stones from the New Visitor Facilities for less able visitors. For example, the Provision of a Visitor Transit System that includes a Drop-off/Pick-up point within 200m of the Stonehenge Monument, to reduce the 2km walk from the New Visitor Facilities at Airman's Corner; Provision of Transit System Vehicles that can accommodate a minimum of 2 wheelchairs; Provision of a surfaced DDA compliant path connecting the Visitor Transit System interchange to the existing surfaced path at the Stonehenge Monument. In exceptional circumstances, and arranged in advance, dispensation for minibuses belonging to special needs groups to Drop-off/Pick-up severely physically disabled visitors at the Stonehenge Monument (accessed via the Visitor Transit System route along the A344 from Airman's Corner).

A sustainability appraisal has been submitted by the applicants to explain how they feel their scheme will address energy efficiency and the response use of natural resources. In broad terms, the measures they are proposing, such as prioritising the use of recycled and reclaimed constructional material and using low energy heating and lighting systems, all contribute to meeting the requirements of national policy.

Finally, it is important to evaluate whether the application can be considered to enhance the local environment. Whilst the scheme is leading to new development at Airman's Corner, it is also leading to the removal of both the A344 and the existing facilities immediately adjacent to Stonehenge within the central core of the World Heritage Site. This can only be considered a net gain in environmental terms. The removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century incursion so close to Stonehenge will contribute to returning the Scheduled Ancient Monument to a more respectful setting fitting of its international status and value. Furthermore the design and lay out of the facilities are of an extremely high quality and subtle design, which seeks to keep their impact minimal.

### ***Conclusions on compliance with national and regional policy***

The planning application is considered, in principle, to comply with national and regional planning guidance. Its design and siting is based on the principle of sustainable development, while there is in landscape terms a significant net benefit of removing the inappropriate 20th century clutter from the World Heritage Site. It will undoubtedly bring both direct and indirect benefits to Amesbury and the district.

International Guidance

#### ***The Convention***

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the [Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#), adopted by UNESCO in 1972.

#### ***What the Convention contains***

The Convention defines the kind of natural or cultural sites, which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. The Convention sets out the duties of States Parties in identifying potential sites and their role in protecting and preserving them. By signing the Convention, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage Sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage. The States Parties are encouraged to integrate the protection of the cultural and natural heritage into regional planning programmes, set up staff and services at their sites, undertake scientific and technical conservation research and adopt measures which give this heritage a function in the day-to-day life of the community.

#### ***Conclusions on compliance with International Guidance***

While it may be the case that the proposed solution put forward to solve the problems within this planning application has not met with universal support (see Appendix x, page x, comments of neighbours), from the amount of time, resource and research that has been expended to bring this project to fruition, as well as the extensive documentary evidence supplied to support this application there is no doubt that this application has been formulated to make a significant contribution to the aims of the Management Plan. It has overriding aims of restoring Stonehenge to a more respectful setting, free of obtrusive 20<sup>th</sup> century developments, with improved access, improved interpretation and understanding and encompasses a long-term vision for securing the future existence, enhancement and enjoyment of this iconic site. As such the application unequivocally complies with the obligation the Convention places on the UK.

## **5.0 Overall Conclusions**

There are unique and exceptional circumstances related to this case, and an overwhelming international, national and local agreement that something needs to be done to improve the World Heritage Site and its setting. There are no claims that the Stonehenge project is a once and for all solution to the problems in this area but it is an important step forward in an ongoing process of trying to meet the objectives of the Management Plan. The proposal represents an opportunity to make some major progress.

Given these considerations, the environmental and economic benefits to be gained, together with the lack of feasible alternatives and the fact that the proposals are in accordance with the requirements of the development plan, there is **no planning policy objection** to this proposal.