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Prepared for

The National Trust

AVEBURY WHS - VISITOR CAR PARK: HERITAGE STATEMENT



Heritage Statement

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1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement describes the existing condition of the Avebury National Trust (NT) main visitor car park, its location within the Avebury part of the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site (WHS), the impacts of the proposed development on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS, and its proximity to nearby heritage assets. These assets include the Scheduled Monuments of Avebury Henge and stone circles (NHLE 1015546) and Round barrow cemetery 400m south of Avebury henge monument on Waden Hill (NHLE 1008216). Also included is the Saxon settlement that lies to the north (overflow car park) and south (main entrance and coach parking) of the main area of the car park. It also describes the wider landscape setting and the further designations that apply.

With reference to heritage, its significance of the area is assessed as well as the degree of change and impact that would result from the proposals.

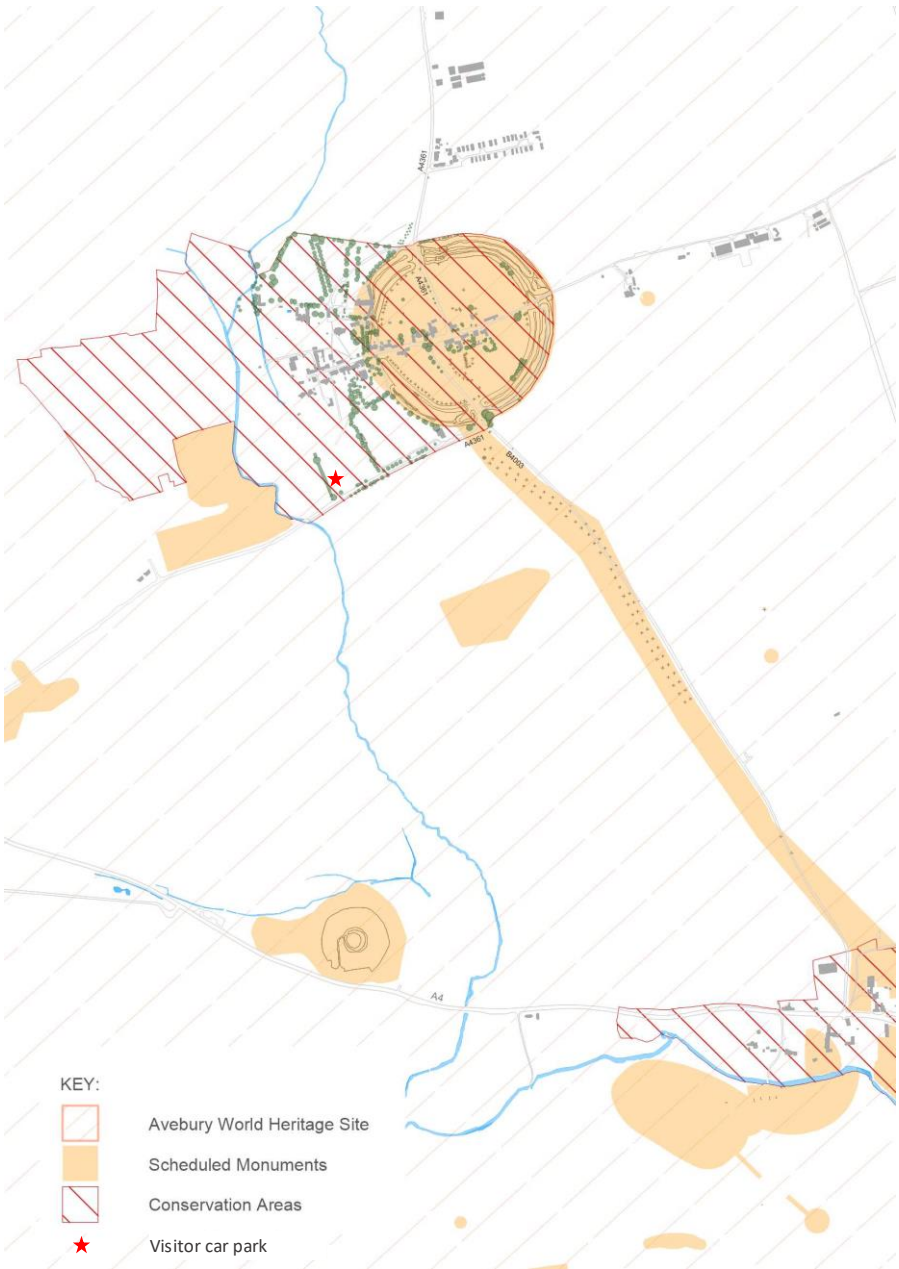


Figure 1: Designation plan

The existing surface of the car park slopes from east to west at a fall of 1:30. Within this gradient, there are minor undulations and potholes that form shallow ponds after rainfall. The surface, which is formed from a gravel aggregate has eroded into a fine dust and this hinders the surface drainage. The existing car parking bays are demarcated with timber round logs that lie horizontally on the surface of the gravel.

2. Site Location

The Avebury part of the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites WHS in Wiltshire covers approximately 2250 ha and includes Avebury Henge and stone circles, a monument which lies c.200m east of the main car park discussed here. The site is internationally important and was inscribed as a WHS in 1986 for its outstanding Neolithic and Bronze Age sites and monuments. Avebury henge contains the largest prehistoric stone circle in the world and lies in a landscape of other outstanding prehistoric monuments, including the West Kennet Avenue, The Sanctuary, Silbury Hill, Windmill Hill causewayed enclosure and West Kennet long barrow.

> 'There is an exceptional survival of prehistoric monuments and sites within the World Heritage property including settlements, burial grounds, and large constructions of earth and stone. Today, together with their settings, they form landscapes without parallel. These complexes would have been of major significance to those who created them, as is apparent by the huge investment of time and effort they represent. They provide an insight into the mortuary and ceremonial practices of the period, and are evidence of prehistoric technology, architecture and astronomy. The careful siting of monuments in relation to the landscape helps us to further understand the Neolithic and Bronze Age.' (UNESCO 2013).

In addition, Avebury Village lies within a conservation area and has a number of Listed Buildings.

3. Existing Condition

The car park surface is in a state of deterioration. It is muddy in wet weather and dusty when warm and dry. It is the first and generally adverse impression visitors receive upon arrival.




Parking
One way
ONE
WAY



To remedy this, the proposed development is summarised as follows:

- Regrade the surface of the car park to remove fluctuations in the surface;
- Excavate 3no 1 metre x 1 metre drainage trenches running north south, and backfill with clean free draining stone;
- Excavate 3no ducting trenches running east-west (these will be embedded in the excavation of the access drive – depth of 750mm)
- Resurface the car park with a more durable aggregate to match the existing colour and tone as close as possible;
- Resurface the existing gravel access drive to the west with a porous tarmac surface and tar and chip spray to match the appearance of new surface, including colour.

For full details of the proposals, please refer to the drawings included in the planning application and description in the Design and Access Statement.

4. Historic Environment Records

Some of the closest Historical Environmental Records are located in proximity to the car park as shown below (Figure 2). Not shown here are the excavations at the car park entrance. For a full review of previous archaeological work, a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) has been carried out as part of this application.

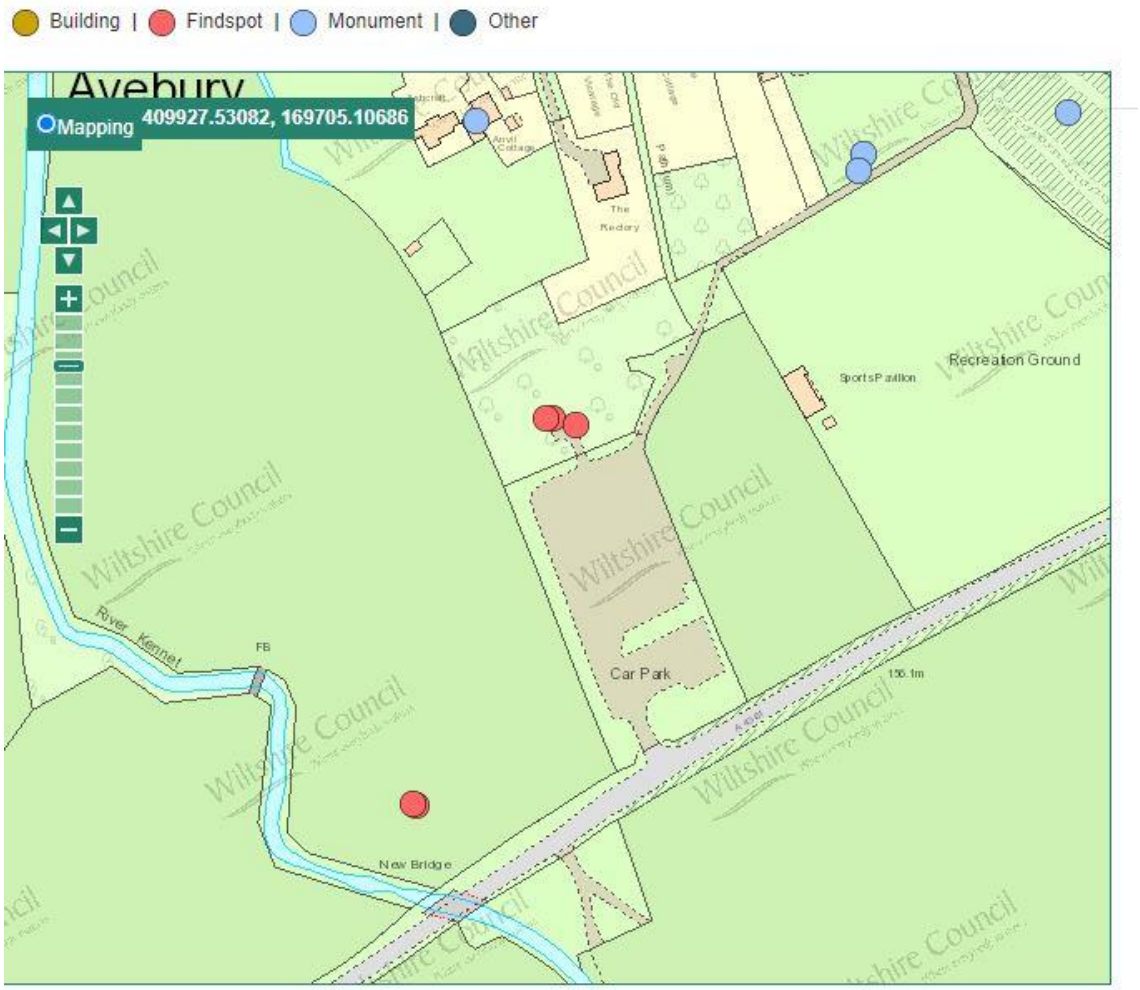


Figure 2: Historic Environment Records plan

Type	Ref	Name	Summary
	SU16NW104	Avebury Stone Circle and Henge	Neolithic ceremonial monument. A henge site with standing stone circles.
	SU06NE140	Neolithic Finds, Near Avebury Trusloe	Neolithic flint tools and pottery excavated.
	SU06NE526	Post Medieval Pottery, Avebury Carpark	Post-medieval pottery from excavation 1985.
	SU06NE055	Mesolithic Flint, Near Avebury Trusloe	Mesolithic flint tools excavated between 1983 and 1986.
	SU06NE455	Medieval Finds, Avebury Carpark	Late medieval material excavated from trench or ditch 1985.
	SU16NW455	Medieval Settlement, Avebury School Site	A medieval settlement site excavated by Faith Vatcher.
	SU06NE402	Saxon Grubenhaus, Avebury Carpark	Saxon sunken hut revealed by excavation 1985.
	SU06NE532	17th/18th Century Chalk Quarry Pits, High Street, Avebury	Two post medieval chalk quarry pits were discovered adjacent to Avebury High Street in 2008. The chalk quarried from these pits is likely to have been used in local buildings.
	SU16NW408	Saxon Settlement, Avebury School Site	A Saxon settlement was excavated by Faith Vatcher.

Table 1: Historic Environment Records

5. Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site

The Attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) (Simmonds & Thomas 2015):

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.

It is not anticipated that the car park resurfacing works will affect any of the Attributes of OUV. The site lies on or adjacent to a Saxon settlement which does not convey the OUV of the WHS (see also Section 7. *Significance*). In addition, the appearance of the car park will be as closely matched to its current appearance in both surface colour and layout. This will result in no change to the impacts on Attributes 5 or 6.

Known physical remains from the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods in this location are limited in number (Attribute No.6); however, this does not indicate an absence of finds or features from these periods. There are no known heritage assets of Neolithic or Bronze Age date within the car park. However, given the car park's location within the WHS, and the possibility of encountering remains of Saxon date further archaeological evaluation is proposed prior to the proposed development and appropriate archaeological mitigation thereafter. (See Section 10 *Archaeological Evaluation and Mitigation*).

It is not anticipated that the works will affect Authenticity or Integrity. The car park is pre-existing, due for improvements, and the appearance of the resurfaced car park would match as closely as possible to the existing.

6. Views and Settings

The car park is bounded by mature hedgerows and trees on its northern, southern and western boundaries and by rising ground to the east.

There are two key views involving Scheduled Monuments and the main car park. The first is from the bank of the southwest sector of Avebury henge and stone circles (NHLE 1015546). The second is from the Round barrow cemetery 400m south of Avebury henge monument on Waden Hill (NHLE 1008216). With an improved surface on an already existing car park, there would be no negative effect on the views and setting of either scheduled area, with a hope that the setting will in fact improve due to the current deterioration of the car park and the new proposals.

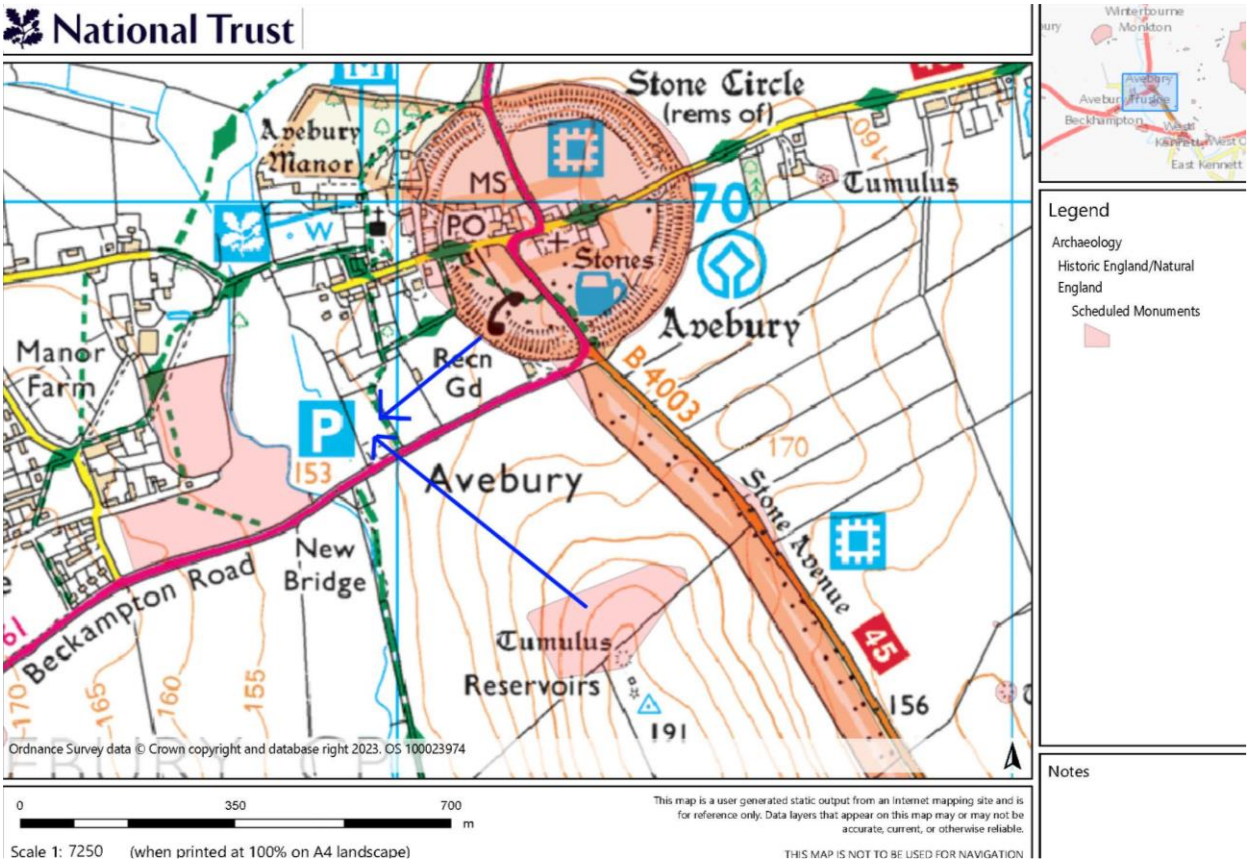


Figure 3 Map showing views from two scheduled monuments descibed above

7. Significance

Avebury holds international significance for its complexes of outstanding prehistoric monuments, including the largest prehistoric stone circle in the world, and 'represents a unique embodiment of our collective heritage' (Simmonds & Thomas 2015).

The car park is situated in a central location within the Avebury part of the WHS and, although heritage assets that lie within the area of the car park are not Scheduled and do not convey the OUV of the World Heritage Site, the significance of the area lies in the early historic connections to the prehistoric monuments within the landscape and the prehistoric influences on later periods. It's significance also lies in the potential origins of Avebury as a village and is of local and potentially national significance but does not convey the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS.

Saxon Heritage Assets

HER Ref	Name	Summary
SU06NE402	Saxon Grubenhaus, Avebury Carpark	Saxon sunken hut revealed by excavation 1985.
SU16NW408	Saxon Settlement, Avebury School Site	A Saxon settlement was excavated by Faith Vatcher.
EWI3696	Saxon SFBs, Avebury Carpark entrance	Saxon Sunken Feature Buildings and associated archaeology revealed by Vatcher excavations in 1976.

Avebury henge and stone circles (NHLE 1015546) lies approximately 200 metres to the east of the main car park, the latter of which is also partially overlooked by the Round barrow cemetery 400m south of Avebury henge monument on Waden Hill (NHLE 1008216), both of which convey the OUV of the WHS.

8. Archaeology

The extent of archaeological remains extant beneath the car park is unknown, but there is potential for the presence of Saxon and medieval finds and features, including a possibility of SFBs (see DBA attached to this application) and earlier archaeology of prehistoric date. Geophysical Survey (Ground Penetrating Radar) has previously been carried out, however the results are difficult to interpret due to numerous previous stages of repair / infilling and previous resurfacing which has affected the results. The Ground Penetrating Radar results will, however, be drawn upon to help inform both the positioning of the proposed drainage and further archaeological evaluation and mitigation (See Section 10).

9. Design development

The proposal is to regrade the existing car park to form a consistent shallow fall from east to west and then capture the surface water in two 1-metre-deep trenches. Another drainage trench of the same design is proposed to improve drainage within the coach parking area. These will act as linear soakaways, attenuating the peaks during heavy rainfall and allowing the water to filter through to the more free-draining substrate soils. In terms of the archaeology, it is acknowledged that this will need careful mitigation and protection. The strategy of adopting a shallow regrading and capping of the existing surface has been developed to minimise the impact on the archaeological remains. The proposals includes 3no. ducting trenches (at 750mm depth) to facilitate the installation of services in future.

10. Archaeological Evaluation and Mitigation

It is proposed to carry out archaeological evaluation prior to the proposed development. This is likely to include appropriately positioned test pits. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the evaluation will be submitted to Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service in due course. Following this, a WSI for archaeological mitigation (taking into account the results of the evaluation and previous fieldwork) will be submitted to Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service prior to the start of the proposed works.

11. Conclusion

The development proposals are limited in both their extent and character. The impact on the significance of heritage assets is assessed to be negligible, with appropriate archaeological evaluation and mitigation proposed.

References

Simmonds, S. & Thomas, B. 2015. Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site Management Pan 2015. Liverpool University Press.

USESCO. 2013. UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/373 (accessed 06 September 2023).