

AVEBURY PARISH COUNCIL
A POLICY STATEMENT ON COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE

Context

About 15 years ago it was noted that “Avebury attracts around 350,000 annual visitors.”¹

There has been no reduction since. For many the chief attraction of the place is its authenticity. People visit Avebury because it “is an artificial entity, characterised by diversity of ownership, management agencies and land use.”² There is nowhere else quite like it.

The village of Avebury is small and, given the numbers visiting it, its character is fragile.

Accordingly there are WHS management plans aiming amongst other objectives to conserve the essence of Avebury. They were endorsed by stakeholders and published in 1998, 2005, and 2015.

Action 34 of the 2015 plan asserts that implementation requires: “work with planners and parish/town councils to reduce advertisements, banners and signage within the WHS both through the planning process and where formal planning permission is not required.”³ An accompanying justification for this action observes: “street furniture, signage and advertisements are all part of normal daily life but ill thought out street furniture, banners and signage can be intrusive. Modern clutter should be kept to a minimum and location and design should be carefully considered.”⁴

Current situation

There are eight buildings in or just off Green Street and the High Street with trading businesses of one kind or another serving visitors and residents alike. These are: Elements of Avebury, the Red Lion public house, the Coach House, the Community Shop, Cobblestones, the National Trust’s shop and farmyard, the Henge Shop, and the Social Centre. Most of these entities trade daily throughout the year but the Social Centre does so only very

¹ Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, ‘Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan 2005,’ English Heritage, August 2005, p. 40.

² loc. cit.

³ Sarah Simmonds and Beth Thomas, ‘Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site Management Plan 2015 Part Two: Key management issues and opportunities,’ p. 105.

⁴ loc. cit.

occasionally (e.g. to raise money for community projects by selling teas to tourists). All advertise their presence through signage. The signs are either permanent being fixed to buildings or temporary (for example using A-boards or similar and vertical bunting or banners). Temporary signage is placed either on private land or, more usually, on public footpaths and/or the highway itself.

Trading organisations will want to advertise their presence. That is entirely reasonable and, in any case (to use the words of the 2015 WHS management plan), “street furniture, signage and advertisements are all part of normal daily life.” However the way these organisations advertise must be consistent with the overall obligation placed on all of us “to reduce advertisements, banners and signage within the WHS” with “modern clutter [being] kept to a minimum [and with] location and design [being] carefully considered.” Large A-boards on pathways and the public highway detract from Avebury’s authenticity. They inconvenience pedestrians and those who use public bus services. They present a hazard for sight impaired and physically restricted visitors and residents. More than one A-board for a single trading outlet adds unnecessarily to visual clutter. Multiple boards seem unlikely to generate significant extra business.

Operational guidance

Avebury Parish Council wants to play its part with other stakeholders in implementing the WHS management plan. To that end it invites traders in the village to respect the following guidance, which has been designed with their commercial activities in mind:

- Where it is necessary to use an A-board, it should be small, sited on private land, and visible only during trading hours
- There should be no more than one A-board or similar for each trading outlet
- Vertical banners and bunting should not be used unless they are intrinsic to a one-off event
- External lighting should be kept to a minimum at dusk and during the hours of darkness.

Together we can preserve the authenticity of Avebury for future generations.