

Possible draft letter to Wiltshire planners for consideration by APC members: Coach House planning applications: 28 Feb 2016

Dear Sir or Madam

The Coach House, High Street, Avebury SN8 1RF
Change of use to fast food outlet: 16/00736/FUL
Advertisement consent: 16/00736/FUL

The Parish Council considered these two applications at its meeting on 1 March 2016.

Application for Change of Use: 16/00736/FUL

The Parish Council can see benefits in the proposal in:

1. Upgrading the Coach House and bringing it into productive use
2. Upgrading its associated public lavatories, and managing them to good standards
3. Bringing benefits to people that wish to buy food or drink in that location
4. Benefiting some traders in the area from some increased footfall
5. Bringing financial benefits for the Trust which needs income.

The Parish Council is aware that the Coach House stands in a very sensitive position within Avebury Henge. It believes any development in this location should achieve world class standards in line with the ethos of an internationally important World Heritage Site.

The World Heritage Site Management Plan 2015 is a material planning consideration. Policy 1d states that '*Development which would impact adversely on the WHS, its setting and its attributes of OUV should not be permitted*'.

The following issues are relevant:

1. The WHS Management Plan aims to avoid concentrating visitors in the centre of the Henge by dispersing them to other parts of the World Heritage Site. The proposed outlet would not comply with this objective.
2. The fast food outlet would be operating at most hours during the year when visitors are in Avebury. It would represent a significant increase in the commercialisation of the centre of Avebury.
3. No evidence has been offered on the need for the outlet, or on increases in demand for food and drink in this location.
4. Litter significantly detracts from the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS, and from the amenity enjoyed by visitors and local people. The Design and Access Statement says that food will be served in take-away containers with non-reusable crockery. Such take-away containers and crockery will inevitably become a source of litter and are likely to become a major problem, especially in busy periods. While litter bins in the courtyard of the Coach House may be used by those eating or drinking there, the applicant makes no provision outside the outlet for litter collection of take-away fast food containers.

Such litter will be time consuming and expensive to collect, or not collected at all. Recommendations by Wiltshire Council's Waste Management Services address the collection of waste from the Coach House, but do not address the need for street cleaning and daily collection of litter.

5. If the outlet attracts passing trade from motorists, additional parking and congestion will be caused in this central location in the village.
6. The proposal may take trade away from local voluntary initiatives, such as 'Teas for Tourists', to the detriment of community organisations and causes.
7. It is not clear whether cooking odours and noise from ventilation systems will arise from the outlet. Both should be resisted.
8. It is not clear if opening times are limited from March to October (Design and Access statement) or all year round (Section 20 of application form). It is also not clear whether the outlet will be open six or seven days a week (see sections three and 20 of the application and Design and access Statement).

Application for advertisements: 16/00736/FUL

Action 34 of the WHS Management Plan states: '*Work with planners and parish/town councils to reduce advertisements, banners and signage in the World Heritage Site*'. The Parish Council is the lead partner on advertising in the Management Plan.

1. The application increases advertising – from one sign that can only be seen a few days a year by a limited number of people when a Coach House door is open – to three signs that will be seen by the great majority of Avebury's 250,000 to 300,000 each year. The proposal very significantly increases signage, and the number of people it impacts on, and is contrary to the provisions of the WHS Plan.
2. The proposed fast food outlet would be the only such outlet in the centre of the village and would face no competition. There is no need to increase the amount and prominence of its signage.
3. The proposed signage on the inside of the barn door and on the panel hung over the gates will detract from the quality of views of the village from the southern quadrants of the Henge. It will also spoil visitors' photos.
4. It is not clear from the application and plans whether the proposed A Board would be located in the courtyard of the Coach House or forward of the wall surrounding it. If it is intended to be located as shown on plan, it would only be about three metres from the serving area and therefore presumably superfluous. If it is placed on the narrow pavement outside the fast food outlet, it will obstruct pedestrians on the only footpath along this stretch of road. It will also be a hazard for passengers boarding and alighting buses in this area and will be an extra item of clutter. If the A board is placed in the road it will be an obstruction for motorists.
5. The owners of the Red Lion did much to minimise signage when applying for planning permission two years ago and it would benefit all concerned if the applicant adopted the same approach.

Recommendations

[Given the sensitiveness of the location and the unknown consequences of the proposal, the Parish Council recommends that:

- a. there is a need for caution in developing proposals for this sensitive site
- b. the present application be withdrawn
- c. the current arrangement of opening at summer solstice be maintained during 2016 while the applicant collects evidence to establish the extent of demand for an extra food outlet in this location.

If during 2016 the applicant establishes that there is significant demand, the Parish Council could consider supporting an application for:

- a. a café, rather than a fast food outlet, with seating in the curtilage of the building where only reusable crockery and cutlery was provided, and months of opening restricted to 20 weeks a year. This could overcome some of the problems associated with a take-way, fast food outlet.
- b. a single, discreet and removable sign to mark the entrance to the café. A sign approximately A3 size could be hung on one of the stone gateposts to the Coach House.
- c. permission for an experimental scheme for such a café to operate for one year only in 2017 with a subsequent review by all parties.

If Wiltshire Council decides to give permission for a fast food outlet, the Parish Council urges that the following conditions are imposed:

- a. the months of opening be restricted to 20 weeks a year
- b. the applicant to arrange for collections of litter throughout the village at least four times a day when the outlet is open and more frequently in busy periods
- c. only one, discreet and removable sign is approved to mark the entrance to the outlet, no greater than A3 size and only hung during opening hours
- d. any consent is limited to an experimental period of one year in 2016, and a full review is then held by all parties.]