

Why should Avebury Parish Council have an interest in proposals for the A303 at Stonehenge?

A note from the Avebury Society's committee for Avebury Parish Councillors' meeting on 6.12.16, Agenda Item 8

The Avebury Society and WHS planning

The Avebury Society takes an interest in planning for both parts of the WHS. Its members have been involved, along with the Parish Council, in Avebury planning Inquiries during the 1980s, production of the Avebury Local Plan (1992), successive District Local Plans, and the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), as well as successive WHS Management Plans. We have argued for planning safeguards and a sensible approach to transport and tourism in both parts of the WHS.

The WHS and the A303

The Society has followed A303 proposals at Stonehenge for many years, as major road engineering within the Stonehenge part of the WHS would have knock-on effects at Avebury.

In December 2014, the Government's announced its plan to widen the A303 with a short, 1.8 mile tunnel within the WHS which is some 3.4 miles wide (see map, over page). The road works would leave twin tunnel portals and deep cuttings, along with new dual carriageways well within the WHS archaeological landscape, and grade separated junctions on its boundaries. Despite intended consultation on options for the A303 widening next spring, HMG has not withdrawn its 1.8mile tunnel plan (termed its 'working assumption') for which funding has been earmarked.

The Society was represented by Brian Edwards at a recent Highways England Historic Environment Forum. He has since raised a number of concerns for Avebury, included among the following points:

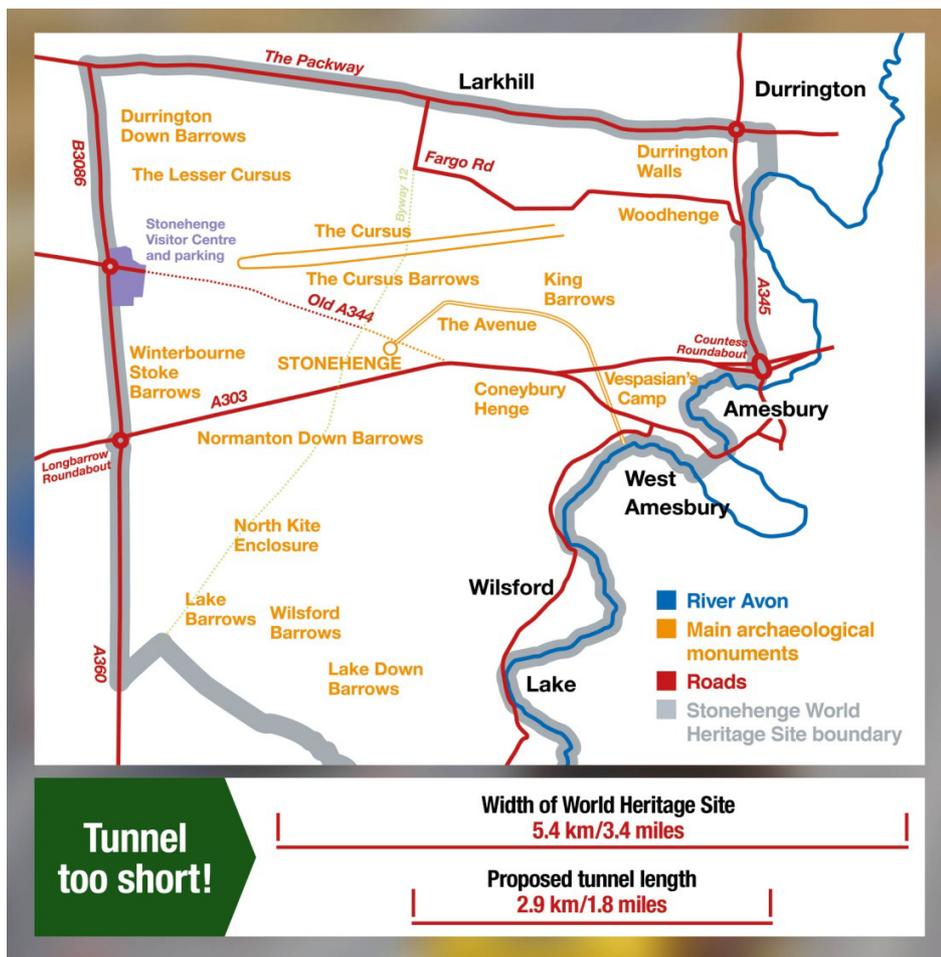
1. Highways England was advised by Wiltshire Council that presentation of their proposals was not needed for stakeholders in the northern part of the county, including Avebury.
2. The impacts of a 2.9km tunnel and road widening on the WHS would be contrary to planning policy for the WHS and HMG's commitments to the WH Convention, thus devaluing our hard-won planning policy and Management Plan safeguards.
3. The severity of these engineering impacts might, at worst, result in loss of WHS status, incurring national disgrace – leaving Avebury without the safeguards accompanying the designation and more vulnerable to the potential demands of developers and local management policies.
4. Loss of the view of the henge from the A303, along with expensive entry to Stonehenge and difficulties put in the way of access, will encourage more visitors to Avebury where access is easy and free. In the 1980s when celebrations were banned at Stonehenge, pagans moved to Avebury instead, albeit now under satisfactory arrangements.
5. Major changes to the A303 at Stonehenge would have far wider implications for roads and road transport elsewhere in the county.
6. A best solution for the A303 at Stonehenge is needed. A clear vision, one that results in no damage to the WHS landscape and its setting, is vital for Avebury and Stonehenge.

If major road works are undertaken in the WHS, it raises serious concerns about potential landscape degradation.

Some questions

1. Should Wiltshire Council be asked why it didn't consider that consultation on the A303 tunnel plan was necessary for stakeholders in Avebury and north Wiltshire?
2. Would the Parish Council wish to become more closely interested and involved in discussion and development of proposals for the A303 at Stonehenge in view of their potential impacts on Avebury?
3. Can the Avebury Society be of any assistance to the Parish Council on this matter?

A Map of the Stonehenge WHS showing the length of the tunnel currently planned. The exact location of the tunnel is not yet known and is therefore not shown on the plan.



Parish Councillors may be interested in a [short film](#) produced independently by historian, author and broadcaster Tom Holland.