

***The Planning Act 2008 - Chapter 2 Examination TR010025
A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down Improvements***

Written Submission by the Council for British Archaeology

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**Appendix C: The Evolution of Proposals for the A303 at
Stonehenge and CBA's Involvement**

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- C 1. Apart from recurrent involvement over several earlier decades, the CBA's principal engagement with the issues arising from what to do with the A303 at Stonehenge stem from its involvement in debates in the 1990s concerning the upgrading of the A303 and development of new visitor facilities. In 1993 (before the first WHS management plan was drafted) the CBA's AGM debated and agreed a set of principles to guide the management of Stonehenge and its surroundings. These became the basis of subsequent formal position statements, including the most recent (**Appendix B**).
- C 2. The 1990s debate about the A303 culminated in a special Planning Conference in November 1995 organised by the Highways Agency and hosted by the Society of Antiquaries of London. Chaired by a senior planning Inspector, the conference reviewed the key generic options and a general consensus was reached that a long bored tunnel beneath the whole World Heritage Site (the 'Green Route' c. 4.5km [check]) was the best means of upgrading the A303 while also removing its damaging intrusion avoiding additional physical impact without harming other areas of countryside.
- C 3. Shortly after the conference, the Highways Agency announced that the Green Route was unaffordable and reverted to consulting about surface dualling options. These proved unacceptable to key heritage bodies (including the CBA), and in 1999, after extensive discussions between English Heritage, DETR and DCMS, a preferred on line scheme incorporating a 2km cut-and-cover tunnel was announced, a third of the funding to come from heritage sources (DCMS/ Heritage Lottery). This was to be part of an overarching scheme to include development of a new visitor centre.
- C 4. With growing concern about the impact of a cut-and-cover tunnel, draft orders were published in 2003 for an online upgrade of the A303 incorporating a slightly longer 2.1km bored tunnel past the Stones. The CBA and other non-government bodies lodged objections and appeared at the public inquiry that followed in February to May 2004. Although all heritage NGOs opposed the scheme, their recommendations for what should be done instead differed: the National Trust proposed a 2.6km bored tunnel; the Stonehenge Alliance and ICOMOS UK proposed a 4.5km tunnel based on the Green Route; and the CBA recommended adherence to the then WHS Management Plan that envisaged a staged approach, by which upgrading of the A303 would follow closure of the

A344, development of a new visitor centre and traffic improvements to relieve congestion at the Countess Roundabout and Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads junctions.

- C 5. In 2005 the Inspector's report supported the online scheme with a 2.1km tunnel as proposed, but almost immediately, in the light of tunnelling costs having more than doubled since the scheme was first announced, the Government announced a review of options to reconsider whether the scheme still represented value for money and the best option for delivering improvements and in 2007 the tunnel was dropped.
- C 6. Over several years in which different options for a new visitor centre were explored and plans developed and rejected, the A344 past the Stones was closed and the present new Visitor Centre opened in 2014. Some of the planning applications not taken forward had included proposals to improve the Countess Roundabout (as part of rejected Visitor Centre proposals) and Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads (as part of another scheme) but neither of these were taken forward. Nor have there been any measures to reduce noise or ease visitor access to the WHS south of the A303. Conversion of the WHS to chalk grassland has only progressed seriously on National Trust land.
- C 7. The development of the current proposals has been described in Highways England's submissions. The salient point to note here is how the official view on what length of tunnel is needed to reduce harm of a surface dualling of the A303 across the WHS and deliver some benefit for the setting of Stonehenge and surrounding monuments has changed significantly. In 2003/4 a 2.1km bored tunnel was deemed to be a necessary improvement on the original 2km cut-and-cover scheme. After that proposal lapsed 2.9km tunnel, (in essence the National Trust's proposal as an objector in the 2004 Inquiry) became part of the proposed Road Investment Strategy (2015-19 and 2020-25), and was duly part of the public consultation for the scheme and announced as the preferred route in 2017. During the course of subsequent design development, this too has been deemed insufficient and the Draft Orders are now for a 3.3km tunnel with 'canopied' half-tunnel approach at the Western end.