



## **Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party 4 January 2011**

### **Bury St Edmunds Visitor Signing**

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 On 26 October 2010 the Working Party considered Report B271 to improve signing in the town. This paper reports on progress in implementing the approved proposals.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Report B271 proposed three distinct types of signing all intended to assist visitors who do not know the town:-

- (a) signing from the main arrival points;
- (b) refurbishing and extending the cast-iron finger posts; and
- (c) signing to retail areas.

These are examined in further detail in the paragraphs below.

#### **3. Signing from the main arrival points**

- 3.1 Signs have been designed for six routes which will guide pedestrians from where they arrive to the town centre. These routes have also been designed to take visitors along secondary shopping streets to increase footfall on those streets. These routes are:-
- (a) railway station to the town centre via St John's Street;
  - (b) railway station to historic town centre along Northgate Street to Angel Hill;
  - (c) Ram Meadow car park to town centre via the Fox car park to Eastgate Street and Mustow Street and via the Abbey Gardens to Angel Hill and Abbeygate Street;
  - (d) bus station to town centre over St Andrews Street North, through Sergeants Walk and onto St John's Street;
  - (e) multi-storey car park to town centre via Risbygate Street; and
  - (f) St Andrew's Street North car park to town centre via bus station and St John's Street or Risbygate Street.
- 3.2 As these routes are outside the town centre conservation area for the most part, all these signs are the standard blue and white aluminium signs with a walking figure and an arrow pointing to the town centre or historic town centre. The signs have been ordered and are currently being manufactured. They should be in place early in 2011.

3.3 Individual signs need to be designed for a few specific locations where a standard sign is not really appropriate. One of these is the welcome sign at the railway station. Another is the sign where Sergeant's Walk meets St John's Street. Officers have commissioned some ideas for these signs which they will put before this meeting.

#### **4. Cast-iron fingerposts**

4.1 A specification has been drawn up for the refurbishment of the cast-iron fingerposts. It basically has three elements:-

- (a) general painting and refurbishment;
- (b) addition of new circular finials with the names of the street where the fingerpost is located; and
- (c) addition of new fingers.

4.2 The new fingers are to replace ones that are broken, and to add extra fingers pointing principally to The Apex, and also to the Theatre Royal, the market, the bus and railway stations and the toilets.

#### **5. Retail Signs**

5.1 In developing signing routes from the main arrival points into the town centre, officers have taken the opportunity to add some signs to secondary shopping areas. St John's Street shopping is currently signed from St Andrew's Street North car park and the bus station. Blue and white pedestrian signs directing shoppers towards Risbygate Street shops and restaurants have been ordered for the arc car park, St Andrew's Street North car park and the bus station and will be erected early in the new year at the same time as the other blue and white signs from the main arrival points.

5.2 The blue and white signs that have been ordered have been confined to car parks and the bus station which are outside the town centre conservation area. Officers felt, however, that within the town centre conservation area, signs of an appropriate specification should be used. On 26 October 2010 it was agreed that officers should develop a new range of signing especially for the retail areas of the town. Officers have been investigating the wide range of signing on offer and will show some examples at this meeting for Councillors to indicate what type of sign they would like. It is proposed to use the same format for all the retail signs so there is consistency across the town, and the advantage of deciding upon a format is that individual signs can be added in the same format as demand arises. Once Councillors have indicated their preference, officers will look at locations, working with the arc management, Bid4Bury, the Chamber of Commerce and retail groups such as the St Johns Street Traders Group and the newly formed Risbygate Street Traders Association.

5.3 The range of signing on offer is very wide and it would be possible to choose almost any shape and any colour combination. It is advisable to choose a robust material that will last a long time. There are really only four materials that are robust enough for town centre signs: cast-iron, aluminium, stainless steel and slate. Slate is extremely expensive, liable to crack and not local to the area, so officers have not pursued this option further. Stainless steel has been used for the

interpretation panels in the Abbey Gardens and at St Saviour's Hospital, and also for such items as dedication plaques. Officers therefore suggest that stainless steel continues to be reserved for such signs and that a different material is used for the retail signs. Both cast-iron and aluminium are very suitable and fit in well with existing signs in the town: cast-iron signs would fit in well with the fingerposts and the map dispensers; aluminium would fit in well with the signs used in the arc. Cast-iron signs are perhaps more appropriate for the historic town centre. Examples of both cast-iron and aluminium designs will be shown at the meeting.

## 6. Removing Signs

- 6.1 These proposals involve adding many new signs in the town. This needs to be carefully handled to avoid visual clutter, which would be counter-productive as visitors tend to get as confused by too many signs as they do by too few. There was discussion at the October meeting of this Working Party about removing unnecessary signs and some of the worst offenders identified then have already been removed. More could be removed, however, and the officers will continue to keep this under review.

## 7. Budget Implications

- 7.1 There is some funding within the current year's highway budgets that can be used for signs and £20,000 Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) funding for a visitors' trail.
- 7.2 The cost of the blue and white signs outlined in section 3 and also the blue and white signs to the Risbygate Street shops and restaurants mentioned in section 5 is £1,000 for manufacture and £500 for installation, making a total of £1,500. This is not as large as might be expected because there were already some signs in stock which could be used, saving on manufacturing costs. These costs have been met from existing highways budgets.
- 7.3 Quotations have been obtained for the refurbishment of the cast-iron fingerposts. The specification has been split into two: the basic painting for which quotations have been sought from local firms, and the new fingers and finials for which a quotation has been sought from the manufacturer which supplied the original fingerposts. All the refurbishment proposed is likely to cost about £10,000 to £12,000, which can be met from the LABGI funding allocated to this project. It is made up of the following elements (all prices are approximate):-

Painting	£3,500 for all 13 fingerposts
Finials	£140 each
Fingers	£130 each
Extensions to posts to accommodate extra fingers	£90 each
Delivery and installation	£1,000 approx

- 7.4 The Council has already paid for the blue and white signs in the car parks to St John's Street and Risbygate Street shops. The cost of the town centre retail signs will depend upon which design is chosen. Bid4Bury has indicated that it will give serious consideration to requests for funding to help with the retail scheme, but would probably expect the Council to make a contribution.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:-

- (a) the proposals and costings for refurbishing the cast-iron fingerposts be approved;
- (b) a design for the retail signs be approved; and
- (c) a campaign be launched to remove unnecessary signs.

For further information please contact:-

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