

## A sign of the times?

### Wells city centre signs: - Useful public information or visual clutter?



There is no doubt that Wells is a beautiful medieval city. However, in an attempt to inform residents and visitors of the numerous points of interest and local regulations, the visual impact of the clutter which has been created detracts from this beauty.

Many signs which were put in place years ago have become unsightly or are no longer relevant or interesting. Just because a sign has been in place for many years does not necessarily justify it remaining in place.

The inconsistent design strategy of the majority of signs is detrimental to the overall visual impact of the City.

Nowhere is the cliché of not being able 'to see the woods for the trees' truer than in the Market Place where there are 68 signs of one sort or another + numerous shop window posters and signs.



Generally, the signs fall into three categories:

1. **Visitor information:** typically recognised by plaques and commemorative signs



2. **Commercial:** typically, 'A' boards, window posters, fly posting etc.



3. **Instructional:** typically, these relate to parking, speed restrictions, dog fouling etc.



Further examples of each are attached.

### What's to be done?

In order to improve the visual landscape of the city centre, it is proposed that Wells Civic Society and Wells City Council, in partnership, could:

- conduct a comprehensive survey / audit of signage
- review the criteria for the continued display of each sign
- initiate a programme of cleaning, removal or improvement of the signs
- work with others (businesses, local authorities etc) towards a strategy to ensure that signage is compatible with the splendour of the city.

The criteria to be considered might include: -

- Is there a real need for the sign?
- Is the sign providing noteworthy information or is it superfluous?
- Is the information on the sign displayed in more than one location?  
- if so, is this necessary? (eg: at each end of street)
- Is the sign helping the reader or the sponsor in equal measure?
- Is the size of the sign appropriate to its content?
- Is the sign in good condition or does it need to be renewed / renovated / cleaned?
- Is the sign a 'one off' or does it conform to design strategy of similar signs eg: Wells in Bloom and Civic Society Blue Plaques?
- Who is responsible for the maintenance of the sign?  
- does the organisation responsible have a strategy for ongoing maintenance/review?

Once the survey / audit has been completed it will be clear whether or not a change in signage management is required.

*Wells Civic Society*  
2020

