



Chippenham Wayfinding Report 2022

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Introduction

Wayfinding plays a major role in how we experience a town, how the place unfolds and reveals features and destinations to be enjoyed. For visitors unfamiliar with the place, clear and intuitive directions to navigate through the spaces, at precisely the right moment on the journey, can influence how welcome and comfortable they feel in the town. However, every intervention in the public realm needs to be carefully considered. The aim should be to reduce visual clutter, which negatively impacts on visitors and residents alike, wherever possible, whilst providing interventions that offer a robust framework for plotting a sensible and enjoyable route.

Visitors to Chippenham come to enjoy a range of qualities and experiences in and around the town centre, including: the town's heritage and built environment; its proximity to nature, especially the riverside setting; the civic offerings like the museum and arts centre; as well as a wide variety of shops. This report highlights the needs of pedestrians (especially tourists and infrequent visitors) arriving by car and on public transport, considering the best way to navigate the town in order to make the most of their visit.

Places are always changing and the public realm, the town's pavements, streets and spaces, form a significant and visible part of that constant adaptation. There is a complexity to managing public spaces in towns, with many voices and decisions made by those with potentially competing agenda – cars and pedestrian needs being just one. Key to an effective wayfinding scheme is to articulate a vision of the kind of place that you want Chippenham to be for visitors, once they have parked their car or alighted from their bus or train. There are currently a wide range of supportive documents highlighting numerous priorities for the town (Appendix 2). Two aspects are consistently identified for action across various partnerships: a desire to integrate the town centre with its river setting; and a recognition that providing more interpretation of the historic environment will improve the visitor experience.

In recent years significant evidence has built up to demonstrate that creating more people-centric, walkable and accessible environments provides a wide range of health and social benefits not limited to tourists. Increasing physical activity, reducing accidents and crime, are benefits from providing pedestrian friendly spaces and this goes hand in hand with building community cohesion, social wellbeing, inclusion and civic pride. All of these matter to a wide range of organisations in the town. However, in market towns, complex governance and different tiers of local authorities means that wayfinding doesn't have a home, straddling as it does tourism, economic development and highways. This is in direct contrast to the protection that the town centre buildings receive from their conservation area status enshrined in planning policy, despite the public realm contributing a great deal to the town's visual amenity. Currently the only formal process to effect change in the public realm is that which relates to removal of car parking spaces, which is a statutory matter dealt with by the highways authority.

In order to deliver a Wayfinding vision, understanding the implementation mechanisms which are required to make change against this background of institutional complexity, are every bit as important as identifying the physical plans. This study, therefore, first provides an audit of what exists on the ground, identifies improvements that should be considered in order to enhance the visitor experience, before outlining a framework to deliver change.

Methodology

The audit of existing signage started from arrival points - the main car parks, the railway and bus stations. Then connecting routes and linkages to the town centre were identified.

Prior to the visit the on-line visitor information was checked and during the visit a paper map "A guide to Chippenham" was obtained from the town council offices.



Findings

The findings from the wayfinding audit are first discussed in terms of, the types of signage and other interventions found, the improvements which arise to fill 'gaps', before the detailed action points are outlined in the future recommendations.

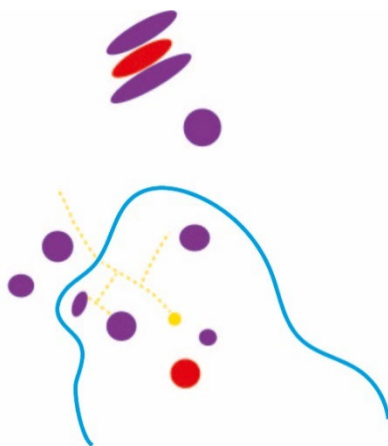
The town has grown up at the intersection of the main east-west route along the river valley and the north-south route as it crosses the Avon.

The historic core of Chippenham, visible in this 1773 map of the town, lies in a meander of the River Avon which constrains connections between the centre with areas to the East, North and West of the town. The streetscape morphology is irregular as it has evolved over time, with the streets being an enduring part of the townscape. The focal point of the town centre is the Market Place (north) with its iconic Buttercross.

As a general point it is worth noting that Chippenham has a great deal of high quality public realm with the river meander and the inner ring road of Ave La Fleche creating a cul-de-sac where the town centre can flourish away from the through traffic which blights many market towns. In particular, the pedestrian areas of High Street and Market Place, with their level surface treatments enhance the ambience of the town centre. Additionally many of the signs are grouped on existing posts which is best practice in keeping clutter to a minimum. This is a strong baseline of quality public realm against which the audit findings should be viewed.

The complete audit of all wayfinding elements with detailed comments on suitability and condition is set out in Appendix 1. What follows is a higher level commentary.

Wayfinding review diagram

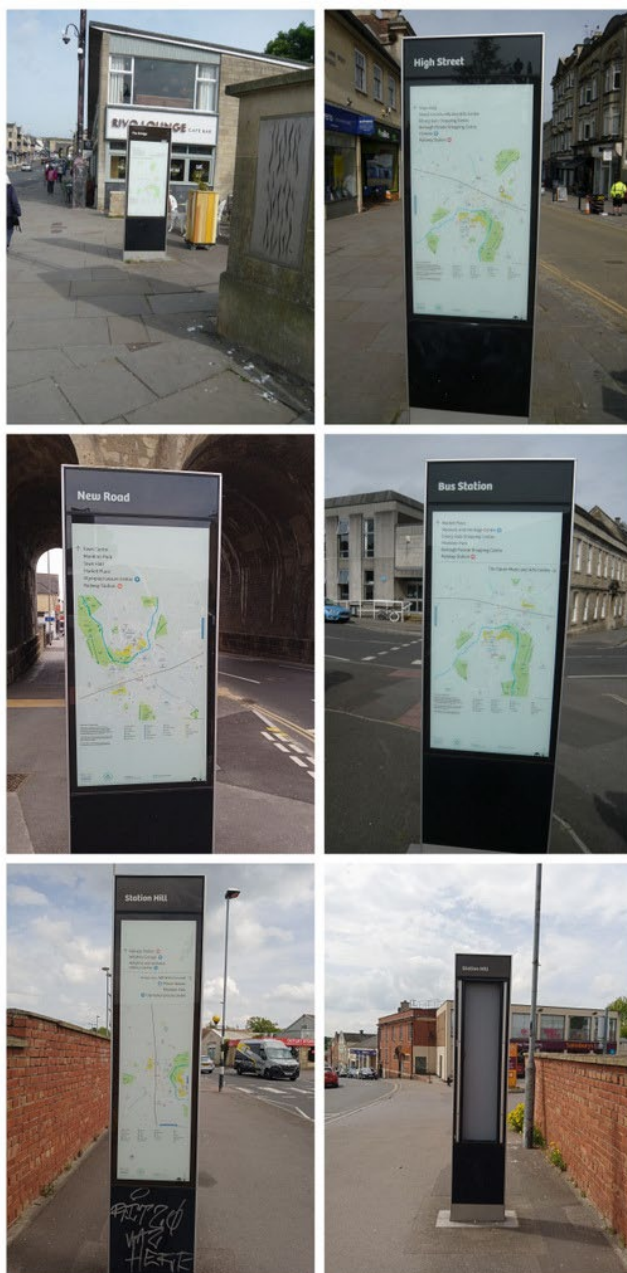


The main car parks are shown in purple, the bus and train stations in red, the main shopping areas and Buttercross in yellow, and the river in blue. This illustrates the divide between the town centre within the bend of the River Avon, where the shops and cultural facilities are located, and the northern extension of the commercial area towards the railway station.

Different elements which influence the wayfinding experience will now be considered in turn. First those which were observed during the visit, followed by those items which were not seen on the ground but which need to be considered in creating a comprehensive wayfinding plan.

Audit findings:

Totem maps



Maps offer a wealth of information for arrivals to a town and are a significant tool in the arsenal of orientating yourself in the place, as well as providing information on possible attractions. The majority of maps in Chippenham are a state of the art totem system of which there are five located in various parts of the town centre, three south of the river and two to the north.

Each totem has two maps and they differ on each face so that the viewer is correctly orientated with the map aligned to the direction that can be seen in front of them (although it does mean that the two maps on the totem cover slightly different areas of the town). They all have 'you are here' locators and provide a useful 5 minute walk radius, so visitors can gauge the rough distances that they might need to cover in order to see the main attractions. The symbols for the main attraction and the shopping areas are clear and up to date. However, the colours could be deeper to help those with visual disabilities, the subtle colour palette means that identifying the distinct areas could be improved. It also seems that the faces more exposed to sunlight have faded further which makes this issue more acute.

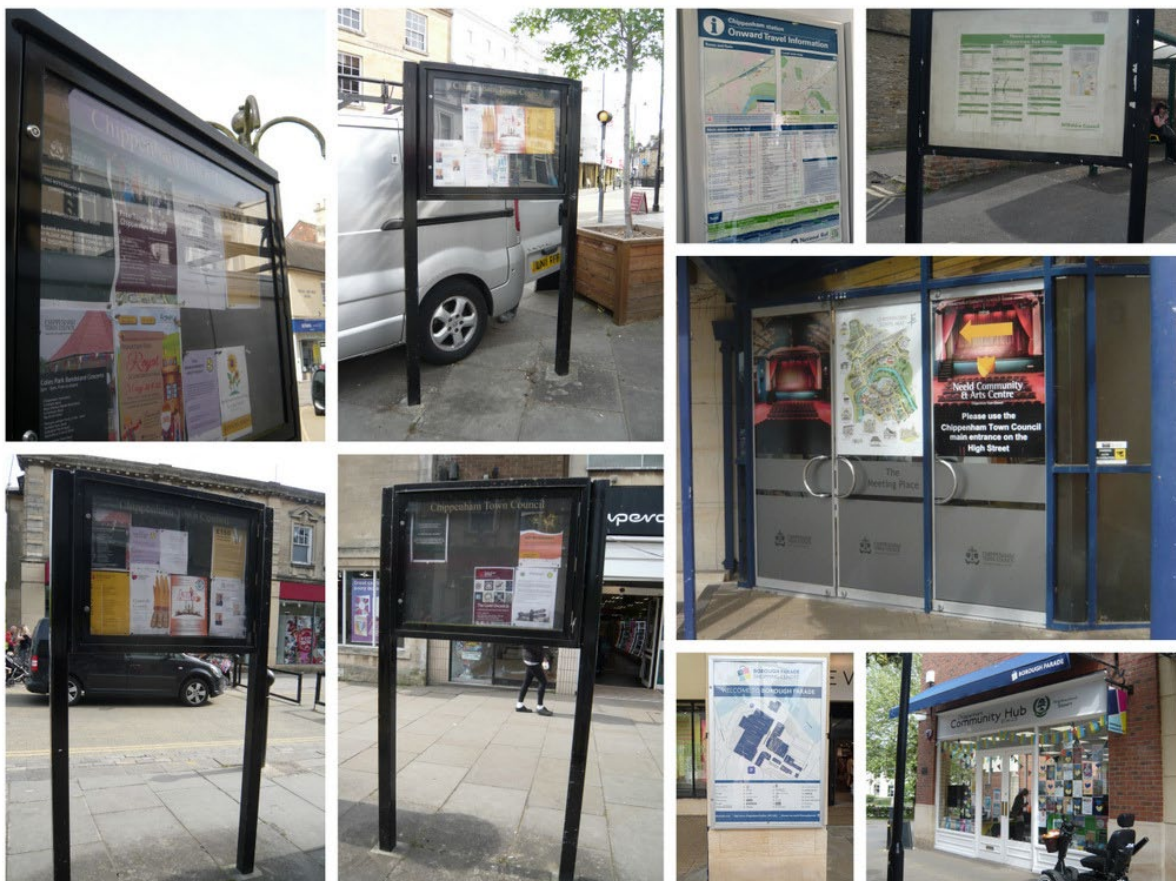
In terms of location, the ones on the High Street and near the Bus Station are well located. The one immediately to the north

of the town bridge can be missed as it is set back from the main sight lines in this area and can get lost in the overall streetscape, although this is a key place of orientation for arrivals from the Railway Station and Bath Road car park. The totem on Station Hill is not visible until you have made the initial decision as to which way the town lies and is currently missing a map, so it may be possible to walk past it without realising its purpose (see bottom two images above). The New Road sign is highly visible when arriving from the M4 in a car, but it is less clear where pedestrian visitors would be coming from to head into town at this point. However, it is useful for those walking away from the town centre who are looking for John Coles Park or the Hathaway retail centre.

Noticeboards and maps

In addition to the totem maps there are some maps provided by the train and bus operators as well as the Chippenham map displayed to the rear of the Neeld Centre. This is an excellent map and should be displayed more widely (perhaps in vacant shop windows). There is also a map to orient shoppers in Borough Parade.

Whilst not strictly part of wayfinding the noticeboards in the town are part of the information available to visitors and townspeople alike and consideration of their location and purpose forms part of the evaluation in the audit.



There are two notice boards which are useful resources for visitors to find out what is happening in the town. These are located in sensible positions at either end of the High Street, and use is made of both sides of the board. They appear to be kept up to date, which is important, with a wide variety of posters being displayed with few duplications (although the renovations of a nearby building at the south end of the High Street meant that the van parked there limited visibility at the time of the audit). The posters displayed in the community hub also offer a useful information point for people new to the town.

Finger posts and directional pedestrian signs

The second main type of wayfinding tool is the finger post, of which there are eight in the town centre and further afield. They are mostly the same type with a distinctive finger pointing 'finger'.



These traditional types of posts are susceptible to the 'fingers' moving out of alignment so they no longer point in the right direction, which has happened to a number of the Chippenham posts. The one at the southern edge of the Market Place (north) has suffered from a vehicle impact and needs to be straightened. There could be greater consistency of which destinations are chosen to be on the fingers with some having 5 destinations signposted and others eight.



There are a number of other directional signs, these ones include white signs (the two, top right, in car parks) and three on timber posts which need attention. There are a wide range of cycling signs (not all shown) which could include more information on sights/potential destinations en route. The one on the top left is a key pedestrian route to the river but that is not mentioned on the sign.



There are also a number of blue directional signs directing pedestrians to the town centre (four in total, one illegible – bottom right), Olympiad (three in total, one needing straightening and one in a car park), The Arc (four, one near the station and three to the south of the town centre which do not lead on from the first) and one each for Borough Parade, the Young Persons Advice Centre and finally one to Calne/Avebury (along the river).

Efforts have been made to use lampposts and other existing posts and this is a good strategy as it reduces unnecessary posts and visual clutter of the public realm.

One key failing of all the finger posts and directional signs is that they do not provide information on the distance or length of time that it would take to walk to the signed destination which would be useful to visitors.

Information boards

The town has a clear need for more interpretation of the historical and natural assets of Chippenham which has been identified in numerous documents.



Currently there are at least six blue roundel signs at various places in the town, each of which is specific to that location. There are a number of bronze plaques with historical information, although they are difficult for those with visual impediments to read. The stone seat in the Buttercross has quite a lot of interesting information which is obscured if people are sitting on it. This too could be difficult for those with limited vision to access.



There are two bespoke signs outside the Town Hall which are key to visitors now that the town information is held there. The foliage obscured the information point wording and it was not visible from any distance along the street.

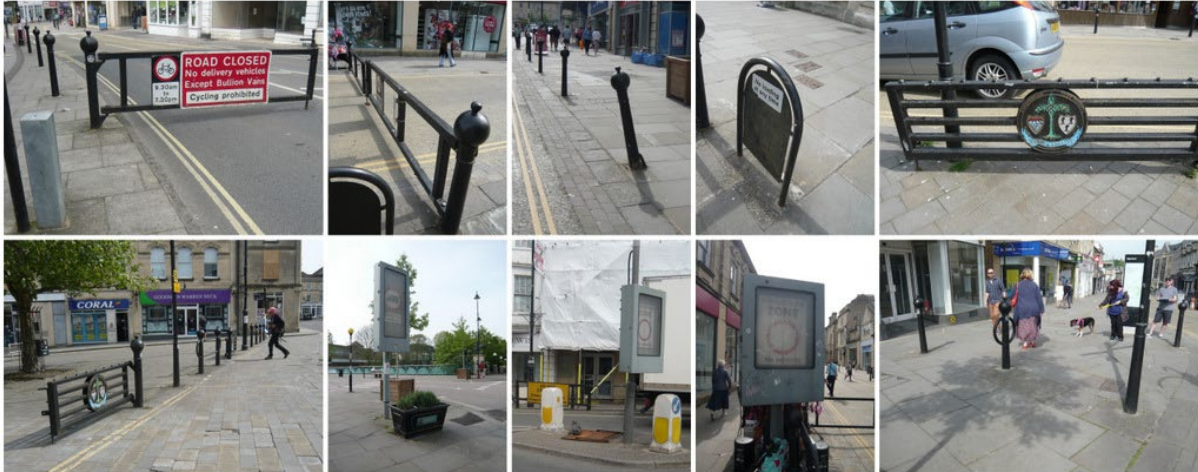
The entrance to the Town Hall has a range of leaflets and amongst them is the 'A guide to Chippenham' leaflet which includes a good, clear map with information on 11 places of interest in the town. NB The Arc is called Westmead Hub, the nature of The Olympiad is not revealed and several public toilets have closed, all these issues should be addressed on re-printing.



This map needs wider distribution, both as a paper map in other places in the town centre such as the library (convenient for those arriving by bus) as well as on-line for visitors planning their visit. An extract from the map is used in the Chippenham Museum leaflet which is good. A slightly older version, without Westmead Hub, is currently on-line in two locations including www.visitwiltshire.co.uk. The up-to-date map is to be found on-line under the town council's 'Discover Chippenham' tab if you are persistent in looking for it, but it does not come up on web searches. [Discover Chippenham • Chippenham Town Council](#)

Another map which was available was the Chippenham cycle map (2015) which includes a map covering the whole built up area with walking and cycling times as well as a detailed town centre plan including recommended cycle routes and some pedestrian footpaths. The map needs updating with the Arc adding and the public WCs in Bath road and the Borough Parade car park removing.

Highways and other clutter



Compared to many other market towns Chippenham is relatively free of the ‘blight’ of excessive highways signage. The most dominant highways interventions which impact on visitor accessibility and enjoyment are the bollards and gates in the High Street and Market Place (north). In the High Street if the gates are stopping vehicles from entering the space then the bollards are superfluous and could be removed which would have a positive impact on the streetscape. The bollards with the cycle storage arms are not all placed in the best locations. In addition the variable sign boxes are dominant features which might be better served by standard signs.

Impact of vehicles



Another issue which should be addressed is allowing vehicles into the Market Place (north) to deliver (and park) during business hours. When the market is in situ in the Market Place alternative arrangements allow deliveries and these should be enforced on non-market days to preserve the space for pedestrians. Several delivery vehicles were observed manoeuvring in the space during the course of the visit, which is not conducive to feeling safe and

comfortable in this key town centre asset. In the long term there is scope for considering whether there is a need for the parking in Market Place (south) as space outside food venues would enhance the area.

Private sector clutter



The private sector is an important component in the town centre, especially the two main shopping schemes, Borough Parade and Emery Gate, which are both destinations and through routes. Each of these schemes has its own branding, which is clear and provided in a way that does not detract from the overall street scene.

However, on the High Street and lanes leading from it there are a wide number of 'A' boards of all styles. These, combined with the large numbers of bollards, detract from the sense of place. The museum has temporary signs which fit over the bollards. If businesses were encouraged to advertise in this way rather than using 'A' boards this would free up some of the footway ensuring clear passage for those in wheelchairs or pushing buggies. Similarly, the large commercial bins negatively impact on the public realm (also observed in The Shambles).

Finally, there are a large number of signs at the bus station which could be rationalised.

Improvement areas identified in the audit:

As important as observing current wayfinding signage is establishing where there are gaps which present opportunities to improve orientation. Driving this are both the key points of origin – the car parks, bus and train stations, as well as the key visitor destinations - the town centre (Market Place, High Street, shops and cultural facilities) and the riverside area (both Island Park and Monkton Park). Solutions to improving linkages across origin and destination locations are now outlined.

Origin: Car parks

Currently there are no maps in the car parks and adding information at this initial contact point would transform the wayfinding experience for visitors from the moment of arrival. The existing 'Guide to Chippenham' map could be utilised in all the car parks to aid this initial orientation as it has the car parks clearly identified. The new maps should ideally be placed close to pay and display machines or other prominent 'decision' points.

There are choices of exit from a number of the car parks. For example, in the Bath Road car park, there is a choice of north, the opposite direction to the town centre, or south, through the roofed area which leads over the bridge to the town centre. There are two car park areas for the Borough Parade scheme. In the main (eastern) car park, visitors have to choose to either go directly to the High Street via River Street or via the signed route to the town centre through the shopping scheme. The western car park area, which runs along the river, ends in a service road and neither this way into the centre nor the entrance through the main car park are signed. Gladstone Road car park is to the west of Borough Parade and most pedestrians will cross over the pedestrian crossing to the main Borough Parade car park to access the town centre, but there is no signage or maps to assist them in their decision making.

The Emery Gate car park is two tier with different vehicle access points. Small pointing signs to the centre do exist but a map at the pay points would help. As a visitor to the town in a car arriving at the Emery Gate car park over the town bridge might present difficulties, as there are no signs to indicate that the car park entrance is to the left directly after the bridge, and this route looks like a service road for the shopping centre. This lack of signage may be intentional, but if the plans to redevelop the Bath Road car park reduce the number of spaces there come to fruition, then this might need to be reviewed as those unfamiliar to the town might find themselves searching for the car park entrance. Traffic to Emery Gate is the main generator of vehicle movements over the bridge when the High Street access is restricted. The southern entrance to Emery Gate, signed from Emery Lane, is also slightly ambiguous as it is badged as a Tesco car park.

Sadlers Mead car park is a modern facility with coach parking on the north side of the river. Whilst there are directional signs into town, these could be clearer. A map, showing that Monkton Park is close by and that the town centre can be accessed via a pedestrian bridge, would be of great benefit. This car park does present difficulties for those visitors in a wheelchair or with mobility issues as it is at the top of a steep hill, whether they intend visiting the town centre or the river and park. The existing sign (on a post) is unclear about the best direction to take and more information/ a map would assist here.

Wood Lane, the long stay car park to the south of the town centre, would benefit from a map with the walking distance to the town centre.

The town centre has few on on-street parking spaces which makes it easier to ensure that maps and signs are targeted to car parks rather than scattered over the whole town.

Origin: public transport hubs

The maps at both the train and bus stations, provided by the service operators, are primarily focused on the transport hub and surrounding streets rather than offering directions to destinations in the town. Providing the 'Guide to Chippenham' map at these locations would help those arriving by public transport to orientate themselves better.

From the station, which lies to the north of the town centre and parks, there are finger posts on the southern exit of the station near the road and the totem on Station Hill, although both could be more prominently located. The train operator could be encouraged to signpost a pedestrian route running along the façade of the building and platform edge immediately on exiting the main entrance towards the footbridge. Beyond the station environs pedestrians could be encouraged to walk down Monkton Hill which leads to the riverside and the town centre via the footbridge. A sign at the top of Monkton Lane would help offer this quiet route as an alternative to the busier New Road route south. There is currently no town centre signage from the north of the station (or the Hathaway Retail Park which lies directly adjacent to the north), although the station signage on the bridge over the tracks is clear about where to exit for the town centre.

The bus station lies just to the south of the town centre and is especially well located for the cultural assets of the library, Yelde Hall and Museum. The route across Timber Street towards the Market Place is intuitive, but for those returning to the bus station more could be made of the Lord Lane link by adding in a sign bringing those who have been in the St Mary's Street and St Andrew's Church locality back to the bus station. There is also a main bus stop on Bath Road which may fall between the possible new map in the car park and the totem map at the northern end of the town bridge. However, as the bridge is visible from the stop, this is the natural way to walk to the town centre.

Signage to the River

The river wraps round Chippenham town centre but visibility of this asset is lacking, partly because of the way that Emery Gate and Borough Parade shopping schemes have been developed, in the main turning away from the river and its green spaces.

Currently there are six access points from the town centre to the river but none of them is signposted (with one exception in Emery Gate which is only open at certain times of day). Working in a clockwise manner from the town bridge:



- The first entry point to Island Park runs parallel to the entrance to Emery Gate car park. This does reduce the impact of this main access to the river. A piece of art or other device might screen the access road and create a more effective entrance funnelling visitors safely to the park(s) beyond.



- Through Emery Gate shopping centre there are stairs from the main shopping area which lead to Island Park close to the footbridge to Monkton Park. More could be made to encourage visitors to go down the steps to the river as it is not mentioned, although the park is.



- On Emery Lane just beyond the car park is a small alleyway which leads to Island Park (Friedberg Way). This needs a clear way of identifying this entrance to the green spaces nearby and the riverside leading to Island Park and the town via the river.



- From St Mary's Street an unmarked path leads down through a building to a footbridge over to Monkton Park. This is a key route from the cultural quarter of the town to the extensive riverside along the park and needs enhancing – public art could be used to entice visitors to the natural assets that lie beyond the archway.





- From Wood Lane a path leads downhill to the riverside near the Arc and the footbridge to the west bank of the River Avon and its path to and away from the town. Currently this is signed 'the Arc' and there is no mention of the riverside area.



- There are several access points to the river to the rear of Borough Parade. Two, including Lovers Walk Bridge, are accessed via the car park, and the final path leads away from the pub at the top of the centre back to the town bridge. There is a conflict here as pedestrians have to walk along the car park to access the river. Better signage would help as would improving the balance between cars and pedestrians at this point.



Walking routes and interpretation

Several of the policy documents (existing and future or draft documents) identify greater interpretation as desirable, although only the Monkton Park Management Plan has identified specific sites (see Appendix 2).

Town

The audit found relatively few interpretation panels and more are required at strategic points across town so that Chippenham's unique history can be appreciated, exact locations would be for local debate and a balance has to be struck between providing interesting information on permanent boards and overcrowding the public realm.

Initially leaflets or a digital resource (perhaps linking with QR codes to physical signs) with explanatory text highlighting specific themes around town would improve the visitor experience. Leaflets could also set out a range of walks focusing on different aspects of the town centre, ideally giving the length of time taken to undertake the walk.

Riverside

The wildlife and other natural assets could be brought to the fore with interpretation panels at strategic points, although a combination of physical boards with information should be balanced with digital information. The Monkton Park Management Plan identifies the location for six additional interpretation panels although some consideration should be given to adding a further map/information board in Island Park to assist those arriving into that space from the south (i.e. not over either of the bridges).

The riverside is made up of a number of distinct areas. There are a range of possible circular walks one of which is illustrated below. The options going north or south of the river could be managed by using wooden posts (like the one at the southern end of Monkton Park) with different coloured rings identifying the particular routes and the length of time to get to the next decision point on the route e.g. green ring for a short walk, red for a long one.



In the policy documents mention is made of connecting Wiltshire College to the town and consideration should be given as to whether it would be possible to include a pedestrian link direct from the college campus to Sadlers Mead so that students could walk through the park to the town centre without having to use main roads.

Recommendations

This section sets out a time frame for the activity to be completed in delivering better wayfinding in the town. Although detailed solutions and suggestions have been identified in relevant sections of the audit above and actions required for individual existing signs are set out in Appendix 1, this section highlights the scope of the suggested programme and offers some exemplars to encourage discussion and stimulate ideas.

<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Summary activity</i>
<i>Strategic</i>	Collaborative plan of implementation: Effective implementation of the two key improvements: • Increased interpretation • Better river access requires a plan for collaboration between all the groups as there are many interested parties (although the policy documents in Appendix 2 show this is a common aspiration).
<i>Strategic</i>	Streetscape strategy: Create a public realm strategy &/or a streetscape design policy document to ensure that future activities and interventions in the public realm are uniform and in keeping with the historic town/riverside – including assimilating the points in the various policy documents.
<i>Quick win</i>	Add the (updated) 'Guide to Chippenham' maps in the car parks and other key arrival points.
<i>Quick win</i>	Ensure that the 'Guide to Chippenham' is updated and placed in empty shop windows.
<i>Quick win</i>	Remove vehicles manoeuvring in the Market Place on non-market days.
<i>Medium term</i>	Create a range of leaflets with walks (short, medium and long) as well as providing interpretive material and theme focused information to complement the existing 'Guide to Chippenham' map.
<i>Medium term</i>	At key points install interpretation panels with information and maps (taking care not to block the footways).
<i>Medium term</i>	Create physical way markers to create a range of riverside trails including different options marked from easy (green) to hard (red).
<i>Medium term</i>	Remove the many unnecessary bollards in the pedestrian High Street.
<i>Medium term</i>	Include links to on-line resources e.g. QR codes/ encouraging walking game (see comments on digital methods below) and ensure that walking routes are provided on all the potential websites for visitors to the town (as well as updated maps).

Strategic initiatives:

Wayfinding projects need to be set within a wider vision for Chippenham. Building a collaborative approach and an inclusive process with all stakeholder ensures solutions will be fully embedded in the long-term future of the town centre. The policy statements and documents in Appendix 2 show some of the organisations who would need to be brought together and include Chippenham Town Council, Wiltshire Council (a unitary authority), Chippenham Town Centre Partnership Board, Chippenham Community Town Team, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (Monkton Park). Holding workshops to move forward on how the big goals, such as: drawing in more visitors (walkers, cyclists and history lovers); encouraging pedestrians (for both health and environment reasons); supporting local businesses; and protecting natural assets, will focus the projects and establish which should be prioritised.

Ensuring the best wayfinding for the town should be seen as a process rather than something which can be finished and forgotten, as towns are always evolving and what is needed is continuously changing. One useful strategic tool, is the need for a Street-scene Design Guide. This has been done in other counties with market towns such as Lincolnshire, led by the county highways team, to improve design quality in the public realm. This will ensure that the interventions reinforce what is unique about the town and its heritage. Currently Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 in core policy 57: *Ensuring high quality design and place shaping*, sets out key ambitions for design quality in this context, however, translating this into effective action requires more.

Quick wins:

Building consensus will help in connecting to the community and those individuals who will be willing to take action delivering the 'quick win' projects whilst the more complex tasks are being worked up. The local authority will need to be fully on board for new maps to be installed.

New interventions: Waymaker posts

Once the strategy for the town has been established, and the branding agreed upon (ideally within the context of a street-scene design guide) the next phase of the wayfinding project is for new items to be designed and installed. Often this means streamlining the messages you want to get across – too much information and choice can be counter-productive. Waymarker posts are a highly effective as due to their size and visibility, visitors can easily identify their location and navigate their way effectively and can include a number of routes colour coded on one post.



Waymarker posts

These posts are an efficient way of providing directions and intermediate route information, with the possibility of several routes being integrated on one post. Infographics and small information panels and maps can be inserted at key points.

These small posts are visible, yet not intrusive, so can be inserted at key decision points with walking distances provided.

New interventions: Interpretation panels



Interpretive panel designs

Numerous examples of information boards exist and consideration needs to be given to local context. Interventions need to be legible for the visually impaired (high contrast and clear fonts) and be placed sympathetically in the townscape.

Fixing boards to buildings can be a way of ensuring that street 'clutter' is avoided and panels at waist height can also be less intrusive.



Modern technology

Today's visitors expect an 'omni-channel experience' from the first moment of planning the trip, during the visit, and post-visit. It has never been more important to have your wayfinding system align with your branding and provide a seamless online experience. The town already has the town council website and the printed map. Strengthening the digital experience is recommended. One possible project includes incorporating QR codes in both permanent locations such as interpretive locations or in a more temporary way perhaps in shop windows/ places of interest. It is a low-cost mobile phone engagement tool that makes destinations tourist-friendly. By scanning a QR Code, the visitor is linked to relevant text, photos, videos, audio guides etc. Monmouth has used this to become a 'Wikipedia town' with over a thousand QR codes across the town.

[Wikipedia:GLAM/Monmouthpedia - Wikipedia](#)

Encouraging more trips on foot or by cycling can also be encouraged by using digital. Hounslow, for example ran a successful month long game [We transformed a London borough into a game to get fewer people travelling by car -- here's what happened \(theconversation.com\)](#)

Finally, digital solutions can assist with making the town accessible e.g. York's Dementia Without Walls Project not only reviewed their signs and interpretive boards (colours, typefaces, contrast levels etc) but also supplemented this with digital downloads of additional audio and text based support information. "What is good for people with dementia is good for everybody".

NB the town currently displays signs to access the town's wi-fi which is enormously useful for visitors seeking information 'on-the-go' but on the audit visit it was not possible to connect.