

Wayfinding and Signage Strategy

6.3 Wayfinding...

Relevant Previous Commissions

Chester Heritage Interpretation Masterplan, Imagemakers, March 2009

The need for a signage and wayfinding strategy was identified in the IMP produced in March 2009. A relevant summary of this report is provided in the synopsis of recent studies in Part 2. The IMP developed conceptual designs for a suite of wayfinding signage elements. These have been developed further in this strategy. This strategy also proposes specific locations for these signage types.

Chester's City Walls and Towers – Competitiveness Study, Jura Consultants, January 2010

This study was produced as part of the PORTICO project. One of the key aims of the project is to enhance the City Walls as a thoroughfare and key piece of visitor infrastructure which is used to access other attractions.

The report also identified the need to improve signage to access points on the walls and waymarking of the route itself. These should be designed to match the brand developed for city-wide signage (as proposed in the IMP).

Portico: Chester City Walls and Towers Interpretation Plan, Imagemakers, Draft Report April 2010

A summary of this report is also provided in the synopsis of recent studies in Part 2. The interpretation plan was commissioned through Portico, which is an ERDF funded project. The vision is for Chester's City Walls to become one of the best historic city trails in Europe. The interpretation plan proposes a number of wayfinding and interpretation projects, some of which could be funded by Portico (as priority projects) and some are presented as aspirational proposals to be implemented as funding/opportunities are identified.

The report recognises the importance of the City Walls as a continuous route circling the city centre and providing views of and physical connections to all the key visitor attractions in Chester.

The priority, wayfinding related projects proposed to be funded by Portico are listed below:

- **Website:**
'Explore the Walls' dedicated website (likely to include map based wayfinding information).
- **Orientation Panels:**
Vitreous enamel map based orientation panels at the principal access and egress points along the walls route. Suggested locations are included for these. Details of the format of these orientation panels and their locations have been incorporated into this wayfinding strategy.

- **City Centre Access Leaflet:**

Cheshire West and Chester city centre disabled access leaflet (this is currently being prepared by the council's access officer and is due for print in April 2011).

- **Waymarkers:**

Waymarkers in the form of fingerposts or plaques may be needed along proposed all access detour routes' at St Martin's Gate and Castle Drive (although it is suggested that a decision as to whether these are required should be made once orientation panels have been installed).

- **Smart phone – multi-media 'app' tour:**

Available to download from the internet or from locations in the city (i.e. Tourist Information Centres, Museums etc) onto compatible mobile phones. Downloads would include some wayfinding information.

- **Other installations:**

Many of the proposals listed are related to interpretative features/facilities, although their implementation would assist orientation by highlighting identifiable landmarks on the walls route. Proposal for a City Walls Guide Booklet is included in this list and likely to include wayfinding information.

The aspirational wayfinding related projects that would require funding from other sources include:

- **Grosvenor Road Gateway:**

This gateway is identified as a location requiring a gateway design, which highlights the presence of the walls route. This accords with the proposals contained in Part 3 and would assist in orientation and wayfinding (see holistic approach to wayfinding that follows).



The City Walls Route

A holistic approach to wayfinding

As identified in the objectives in 6.2, a holistic approach to wayfinding is required. It is proposed that the following range of design principles and elements are used to achieve this. Some of these are dealt with elsewhere in the PRDG (see cross references below):

Existing Landmarks:

Figure 6.1 presents a wayfinding overview of the city centre, which shows the key landmarks that aid orientation in relation to key walking routes. These landmarks include buildings, monuments, the City Walls, the canal, the river and open spaces. Some of these are walking routes in themselves.

It is important to recognise the role that landmarks, and the overall varying character of place, play in supporting wayfinding across the city. Key landmarks should be identified on map based information and fingerposts to help reinforce this approach.

It should also be acknowledged that, although not necessarily appropriate to identify on maps, flagship stores within the shopping core act as significant landmarks.

Public Realm Design of Key Walking Routes:

Figure 6.1 also identifies the key walking routes within the city centre. These consist of key streets (based around the Roman street layout emanating from the Cross), the City Walls, riverside route, canalside route and open spaces. It is important that a clear rationale is used in the application of street design, surfacing and street furniture palettes (as set out in Parts 3 and 7 of the PRDG) along these routes.

Figure 6.1 also locates key crossing points on these routes that need to be strengthened through the continuation of surface treatments and provision of safe crossing points. These proposals are developed further in the Part 8 - outline designs and Next Steps.

The key walking routes and key arrival points located in Figure 6.1 have been used as the basis for locating the wayfinding signage locations shown in Figure 6.3.

Wall and City Gateways:

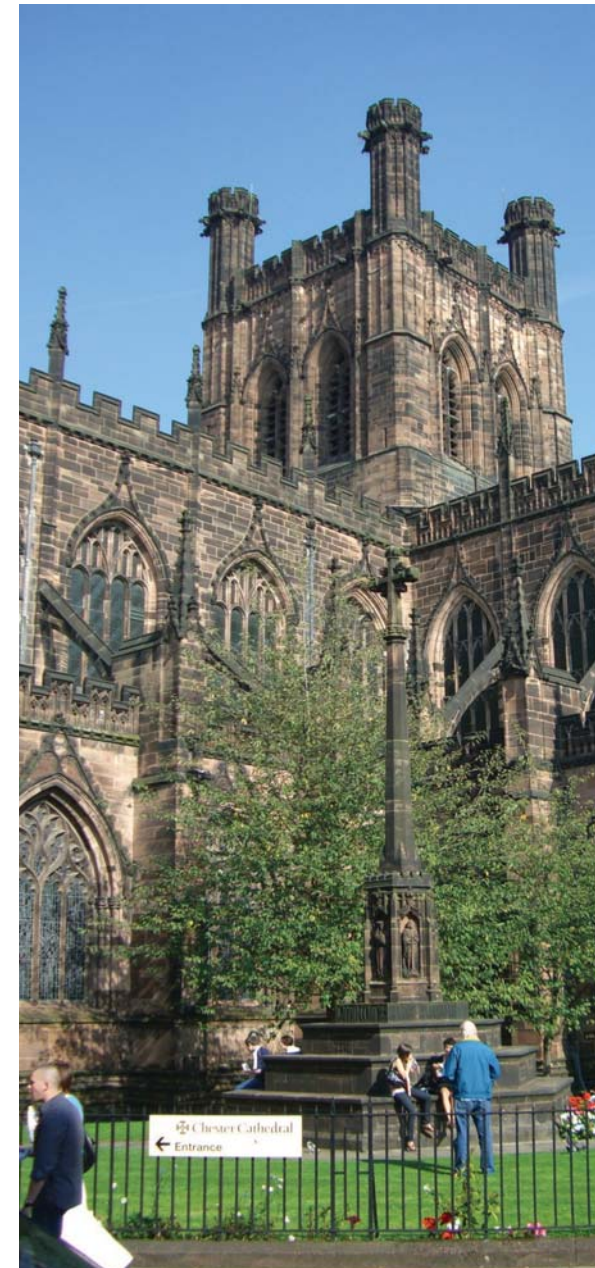
Part 3 of the PRDG proposes the creation and reinforcement of wall and city gateways and spaces. This will aid wayfinding by highlighting the presence of the walls and distinguishing arrival/exit points into and out of the city centre.

Published and web-based wayfinding information (including mobile phone downloads):

The graphic design and branding of this information should match the physical wayfinding signage elements presented in this strategy. Proposals are also contained within the IMP for a new A3 visitor orientation leaflet.

Physical Wayfinding Signage Elements:

These are presented on pages 246-247.



Chester Cathedral - a key landmark

Fingerposts and other pedestrian signs:



Existing fingerpost in city centre – not outstanding in terms of quality and look.

- At present a consistent and traditional style of fingerpost is used across Chester. Although these are not outstanding in quality, they are in reasonable repair.
- The use of white lettering on a black background offers good contrast, but the serif font used makes the text harder to read.

- There are some inconsistencies in the information contained on each fingerpost and as Figure 6.2 shows, there are also some gaps in provision, particularly between the railway station and city centre.
- Directional fingerposts are supplemented in some locations by historic and traditional building mounted signage. This type of signage should be conserved and the surrounding clutter removed so that they can be read and appreciated.



Example of a traditional building mounted pedestrian sign on St John Street. These should be preserved.

- Other examples of cheap modern supplementary pedestrian signage should be replaced in the future by more appropriate waymarking signage.



Poor example of pedestrian signage on Souters Lane



Poor example of pedestrian signage on City Road

Street names:

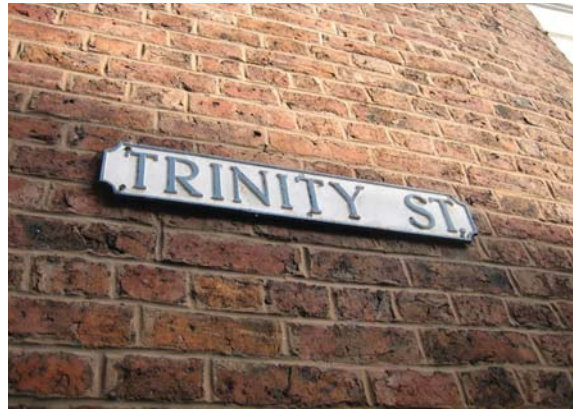
- The importance of street name plates in wayfinding should not be underestimated. Street name plates are currently consistently found along the majority of streets and lanes in Chester.

- The photographs below and right show the vernacular street name plates found in Chester, which should be maintained and replicated across the city centre. The use of the larger plate on 'cross streets' and main streets helps to reinforce the hierarchy of routes within the city centre and is a feature that should be preserved.



Traditional and distinctive metal street name plates used on 'cross streets' and other main streets.

- It is important that street name plates are regularly repainted so that they remain legible to all (photo, Castle Drive, centre).
- The photo (top right) shows an existing example of the type of modern, inexpensive and generic street name plate that should not be used in the city centre.



Traditional and distinctive metal street name plates used on side streets.



There is a need to maintain traditional signs so that they do not appear faded and difficult to read.



Poor example of modern inexpensive street name plates, which is inappropriate for the city centre.

- As well as the metal plates, a few examples were found of street names painted onto buildings. This distinctive feature should be maintained within the streetscape.

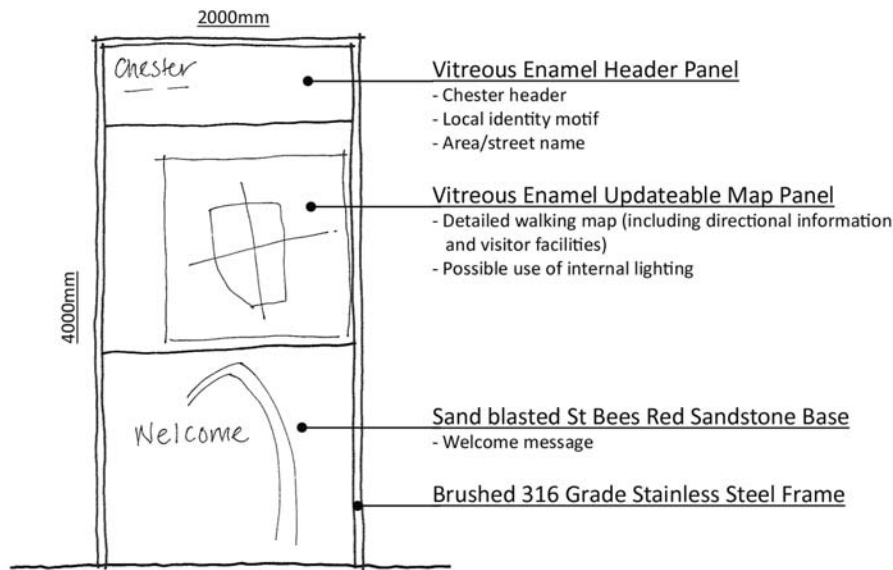


Example of street name painted onto buildings. These details should be retained and protected.

Proposed Suite of Wayfinding Signage (based on Imagemaker's designs).

A range of wayfinding signage elements are needed to provide the right amount of information in the right locations. The information below sets out a hierarchy of signage elements along with details of materials to be used and information content. Further details on materials and design are provided in 6.5 – Further Design Guidance.

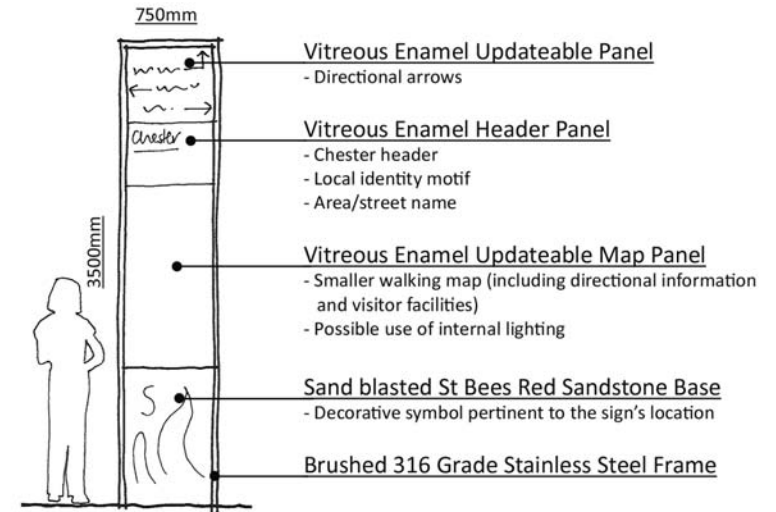
1. Principal welcome and orientation sign



Reverse Side:

Could accommodate information on things to do and see/interpretation based on themes set out in IMP. Potential for artefacts to be embedded in vitreous enamel panel.

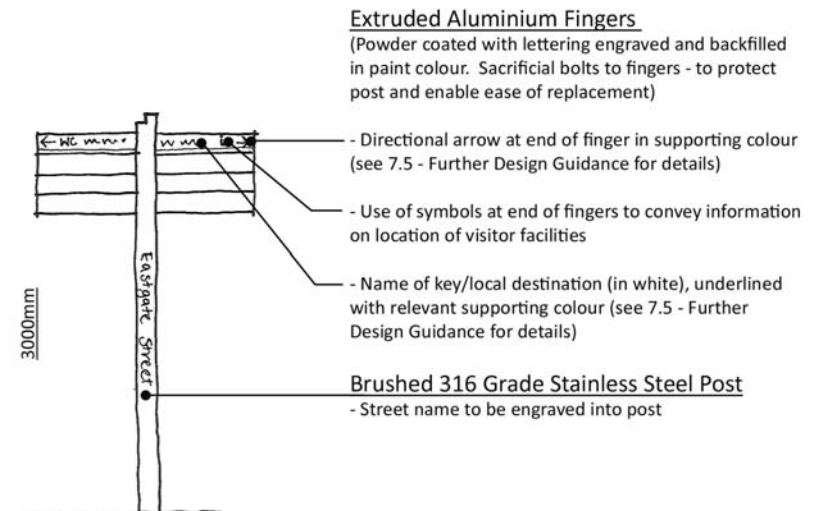
2. Secondary Orientation sign



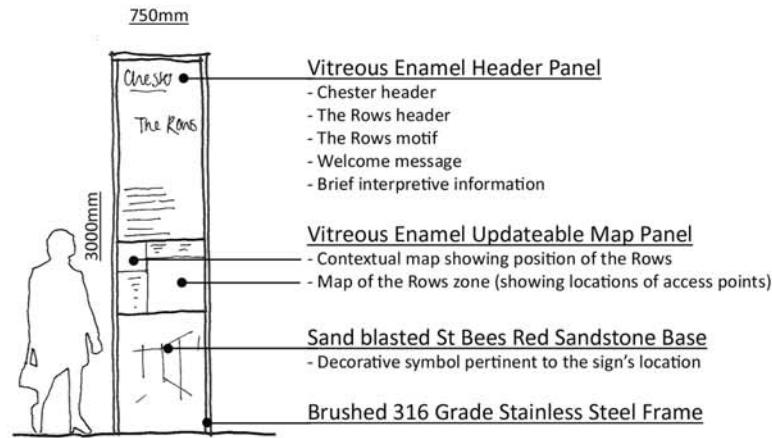
Reverse Side:

Could accommodate information on things to do and see/interpretation based on themes set out in IMP.

3. Directional Fingerpost

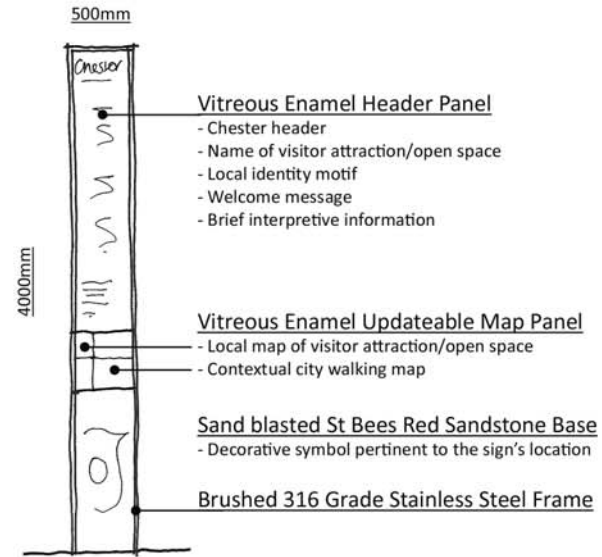


4. Open space / visitor attraction welcome sign



Reverse Side:
 Could accommodate local identity graphic emblem
 (see 7.5 - Further Design Guidance for more information).

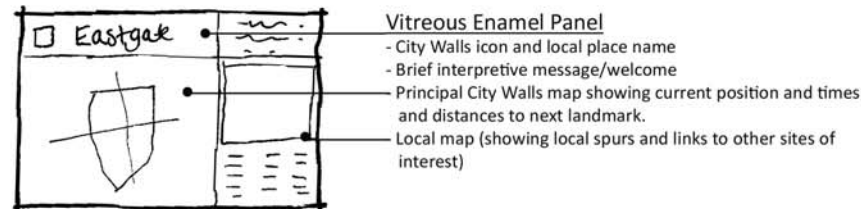
6. Rows welcome sign



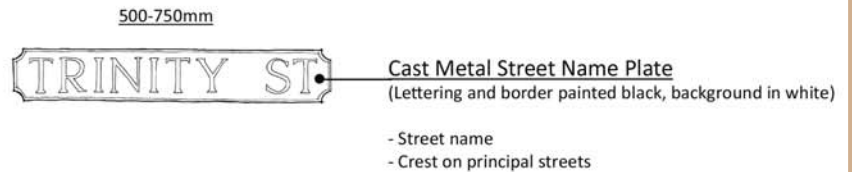
Reverse Side:
 Could accommodate local identity graphic emblem
 (see 7.5 - Further Design Guidance for more information).

5. City wall orientation sign (wall mounted)

1000mm (proposed that sign sizes could vary)



7. Street name plate



Proposed Suite of Wayfinding Signage (based on Imagemaker's designs)

Locations for Wayfinding Signage:

Figure 6.3 (opposite) proposes locations for the wayfinding elements identified on pages 246-247. These locations are shown in relation to the key walking routes (identified earlier in Figure 6.1) and secondary walking routes. The following provides a commentary on and explanation of the locations chosen.

1. Principal Welcome and Orientation Sign

- These are located outside the city centre core on key walking routes.
- These have been strategically located to cover all the city centre key arrival points, such as the railway station, bus station, coach park/drop-off and city gateways where pedestrians and cyclists are channelled from nearby car parks, park and ride drop-offs, canal and riverside strategic routes.
- These are the largest signs and should be located where there is most space for people to gather.

2. Secondary Orientation Sign

- These are the preferred city centre wayfinding sign and are primarily located at all the orientation points on key walking routes. They are also proposed in the place of some Principal Welcome and Orientation Signs where space is likely to be limited.
- These narrow and tall signs can be accommodated on streets and will display map based wayfinding information, as well as directional information. Their height ensures they can be seen at a distance.
- These signs should be located up against building lines on streets so as not to impede flow and also so that they can offer useful directional information.

3. Directional Fingerpost

- These should be used sparingly within the city centre core (i.e. within the walls). Wherever budget and space allows, a secondary orientation sign should be used as the preferred type city centre wayfinding signage.
- Generally, these are located at a limited number of locations at minor intersections/ orientation points, where it is considered space will be limited or where a Principal Welcome or Secondary Orientation are proposed nearby.
- These are also located to confirm direction along linear routes.

4. Open Space/Visitor Attraction Welcome Sign

- These are located at the main entrances to parks and open spaces within the city centre (at Grosvenor Park, Roman Gardens and Water Tower Gardens).
- These are also located at the main entrances to visitor attractions (at the Cathedral, Castle, Roman Amphitheatre, St John's Church and Ruins).
- These are located at key arrival points along the waterside circular route (Chester Cycle Blue Route).

5. City Wall Orientation Sign (wall mounted)

- These are located at the main access and egress points along the City Walls route.
- The City Wall Orientation signs should be mounted vertically on suitable surfaces and positioned in the most prominent locations for those approaching or leaving the walls.

6. Rows Welcome Sign

- These are located at the start of each Row on Watergate St, Bridge St, Eastgate St and Northgate St.
- These signs will need to be carefully located and should ideally be in line with the building line to ensure that they don't impede pedestrian flow.

7. Street Name Plates

- These are not located on Figure 6.3, but should be located on boundary treatments/buildings at either end of each street/alley where currently missing or to replace a modern type previously installed.

8. Cycle Signage Information Hubs

- Two cycle information hubs are proposed within the city centre located on the Cycle Chester- Blue Route. These are at Northgate and Bridgegate where the circular blue route intersects with cycle routes in and out of the city.
- Specific information and wayfinding aimed at cyclists will be provided at these locations. These information hubs could be provided as part of the Secondary Orientation signs proposed at Northgate and Bridgegate.
- The detailed signage design should make it clear that the signage represents a cycle hub, but this information could also be useful for pedestrian wayfinding in the city.

Map Design:

The signage elements proposed place the wayfinding emphasis on map based information. Maps provide an efficient and straightforward way of communicating information and also help users to form their own mental maps and understanding of places. Once developed, a distinct and recognisable 'mastermap' can be applied across a range of different media, as well as to the physical signage elements themselves.

The map style shown opposite should be used to generate a 'mastermap' for the city, which can be centrally authored and updated as necessary. This mastermap will be consistently used for the generation of a range of maps for use on the suite of wayfinding signage elements.

Design Principles for Maps

- Maps should be as simple and uncluttered as possible
- A limited colour palette should be used (see example opposite and section 6.5 for further detail).
- Key landscape features, such as the river, canal, city walls and greenspaces should be consistently identified on all city-wide maps.
- 3D and stylised representations of key landmark buildings/monuments should be used on all maps, with limited use of street/place names.
- Universally recognisable symbols should be used wherever possible to reduce the need for text (see section 6.5 for further detail).

As illustrated on pages 246-247, maps will vary in scale depending on the size of sign, location and intended purpose. The example illustrated opposite would be incorporated into the Visitor Welcome Sign at the Roman Amphitheatre and consists of a local map of the specific site as well as a city-wide context map.

Figure 6.5 – Example of mapping style developed (credit: Imagemakers)

