

design 

# Wayfinding Report

**Thame**



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Audit

This report commissioned by **Thame Town Council** to look into the implementation of a consistent wayfinding approach for **Thame**.

A successfully implemented wayfinding solution must achieve the following:

- Make it easier to navigate around the Town
- Make it easier to get to and from the car parks
- Increase awareness of the Town and its heritage
- Make directions clear and up-to-date for the user
- Integrate with new Public Art projects
- Give the Town a more welcoming feel
- Focus on estates and residential areas working closely with LPRA to include the extensive work already completed on pathways through the estate
- Reflect the needs for improved walking identified by Thame Green Living Plan and ensure that these are represented in the final solution

Abbreviations used in the report:

- **ADS** - Advanced Directional Sign (Road signs)
- **DfT** - Department for Transport
- **PROW** - Public Right of Way



Following our site visit on **9<sup>th</sup> September 2019** we have made the following observations and raised the subsequent questions.

## Pedestrian Audit

There is quite a variety mixture of styles of pedestrian signs around Thame. These signs are also in different conditions with many looking tired, with worn paint. The pedestrian directional signs in Thame centre can be divided into several groups.

### Heritage-style Fingerposts

These signs are found throughout the town and are the main part of the existing pedestrian wayfinding in Thame.

Most of these signs are in a poor condition, with peeling paint, dirt and moss.

Many of these signs blend into their surroundings and are not noticed unless they are in direct line of sight. This is due to the colours of the signs and the lack of a beacon to alert pedestrians to their existence.

The signs have very few pictograms to assist people, particularly those whose first language is not English including tourists. The few pictograms which are shown are not consistent.

**fig. 1** is a prime example of where these fingerposts fail. The fingers are looking tired with worn paint which can both affect the legibility of a sign.

The colours of white on black, although in keeping with the historical aesthetic of the town, do not stand out enough for people to notice the signs and use them for help. Other colour combinations and coloured beacons on top of the pole can help resolve this. There is also a question about whether the sign is in the best location? Many people could miss a sign because it is not sited correctly.



Fig. 1: Shabby heritage-style fingerpost

The destinations do not have distances shown in minutes. People measure in time as opposed to distance when walking. Most of the fingerposts around the town do not show walking distances or times, which doesn't help understanding the scale of the town and just how close locations are.

The fingerpost in **fig. 2**, directs towards the Barn Centre, Museum & St Mary's church but there is no corresponding finger to direct the other direction to the Town Centre or even any other destination. This finger is made harder to find as the black post acts as camouflage against the brick work and frames of the building behind.

This area shows a lack of coherent and visible pedestrians signs to direct pedestrians. One of these routes should be signed to help visitors find the town centre or other significant destinations.

**fig. 3** The Catholic Church street name plate perfectly blends with the wall paint, this does not help legibility.



Fig. 2: Rusty post blends in with background



Fig. 3: Poor location for signs

The sign in **fig. 4** is placed on a wall around greenery about eye level but due to its location and base colour, it is lost in its surrounding. The intention is to direct pedestrians to the a footpath.

## Map Boards

The idea of having map boards at specific locations around the town to help pedestrians orientate themselves with the town is a good one.

The locations of these map boards are not the best and do not announce themselves as being information points.

### Thame Town Council Map Boards

These Boards have cluttered information of local businesses, Promotional leaflets and Maps. These maps are all North-facing, which don't necessarily help the user orientate themselves with the environment around them. There are also heavily cluttered and need to be refined to aid pedestrian wayfinding. The location in **fig.5** has one map board and has other pinned pamphlets and posters which clutter the information. We need to remove clutter and consolidate the existing information.

### Play Area Map Boards

These are used in four areas across Thame namely at Churchill Crescent Play area, Elms Park Play area, Southern Road Play area and Queen Elizabeth Circle. In **fig. 6** The map board at Queen Elizabeth Circle needs to be replaced and updated. It has also been subject to vandalism. The Information is difficult to read and does not help a pedestrian to find their way. Not all are vandalised, but they are all tired.



Fig. 4: Hidden footpath sign



Fig. 5: Map Boards with clutter



Fig. 6: Dated and Vandalized Map Boards

## Footpath Signs

These signs **fig. 7** have been installed to encourage people down some of the side roads off the Town Centre. These are found around the more residential areas of the town to show the location of some of the public footpaths and cut-throughs. The signs used have wooden or metal posts and a small flag.

These are usually signed with dark green DfT PROW flags, only sometimes displaying where they lead to or the name of the path. These flags need to have a Street Name or location indicator to enable the pedestrian to locate themselves. We understand these are standard signs across OCC. These signs could be further improved to fall in line with national guidelines if they are Public Rights of Way (PROW).

Another issue with this sign is the arrow. The sign is shaped to point a particular direction, without that yellow arrow, the font can be larger and easier to read.

## Trail Signs

No Trail signs were found attached to lampposts or structures in and around Cuttle Brook Nature reserve. Also there are no proper signs directing towards the Pheonix trail so those wanting to follow this route would tend to not find the start of this route and know what to look out for. However with clear trail signs we could find a solution here.

## Guerilla Signs

These are signs **fig. 8** and banners which have been installed, often without any permission of the local authority. Around many of the busier parts of the town these signs have been installed by the business owners to promote their business location, particularly those who are away from the main retail area of the Centre and the High Street.

Although many of these signs were installed with the best intentions, they add much visual clutter to the environment. We don't wish to victimise the businesses of Thame it would be better for the greater good for these signs to be removed.

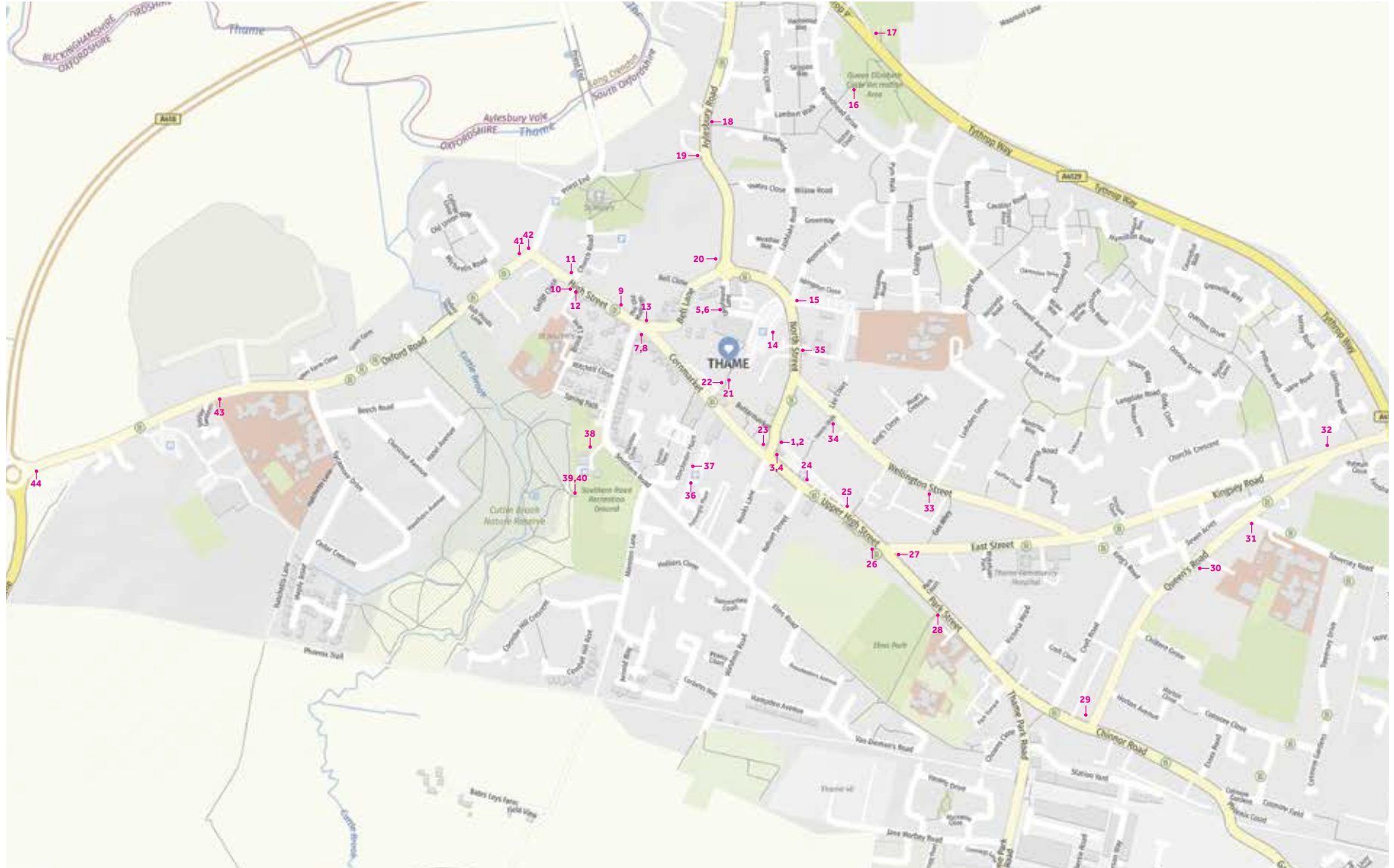


Fig. 7: Footpath Signs



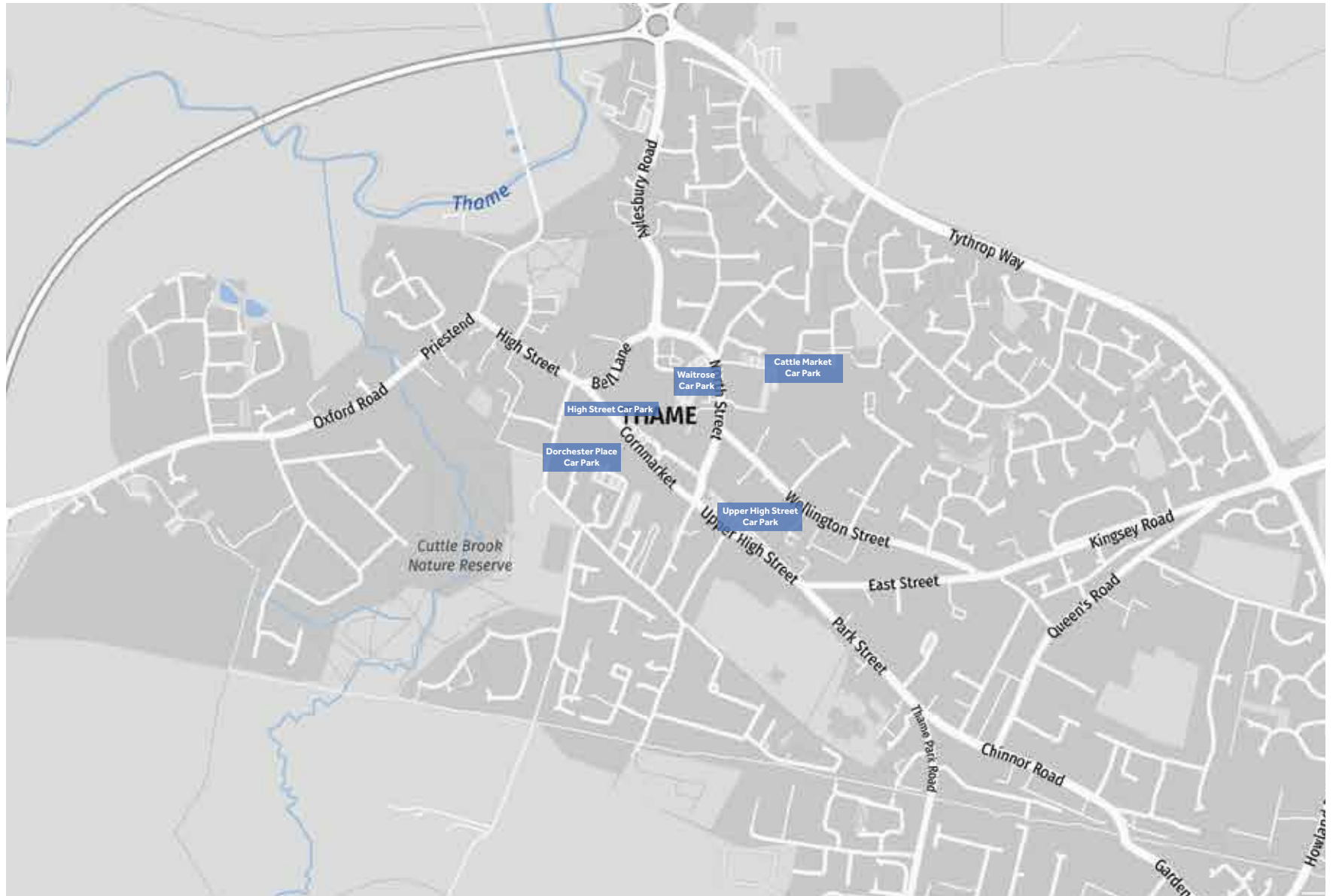
Fig. 8: Guerilla sign

Below is the location plan showing the locations of current pedestrian related signage around the Town. See examples in Appendix on page 30.



# Car Parks Map

Below is the location plan showing the locations of current car parks around the Town.



\*Please note: The Southern Road Rec Car Park is not for general use.

On 9th September 2019 a Stakeholder meeting was held. The meeting included representatives from Thame Town Council, Thame Public Arts Working Group, Thame Green Living Plan, Lea Park Residents Association, South & Vale Public Arts Team.

## Key discussions

**Discussion about Project Aims:** Wayfinding solution needs to:

- Encourage more people to walk or cycle in to the town centre and other key destinations.
- Improve health & wellbeing by reducing pollution in the town centre
- Identify clear routes through Lea Park.
- Integrate new estates to the town.
- Arts enable Wayfinding and Public Art.

## Response to current Wayfinding solutions in Thame

- What signage?
  - Lack of signs is an issue for people navigating around Thame.
  - People don't notice them.
  - It was felt by many that there are not enough signs
  - They don't move people around into the side roads off the High Street and the Centre
  - Locals don't need them - primarily new residents do not realise how to walk through Thame, especially those on Lea Park who follow the road route, as they have to drive out and back in to Thame. Often walking is not explored.
  - Visual clutter of existing signs - A boards and other private signage.
  - Pheonix Trail has no signs leading to it.
  - Parking signage is not adequate in the centre.
  - Certain signs are prime examples of the problems with the current navigational signage in Thame.
  - Information points for the town basically are Adverts on Print material, Town website, Maps displayed in Parking Areas.
  - **Residents** in and around Lea Park, as well as in new estates find it hard to navigate through pedestrian ways to other parts of the Town by-passing the Town Centre.
- Regarding crossings, it was raised that **Pedestrians** often misinterpret the speed bumps

in the town centre (outside the Town Hall/across to Co-op) for crossings, with the installation of the aids for visually impaired also in place, this poses a health & safety issue for the pedestrians. This needs to be addressed by Oxfordshire County Council.

- It was felt that the existing pedestrian fingerposts, direction flags are not sufficient for Pedestrian wayfinding.

The current layout of the **information boards** in Montesson Square are no longer suitable. It was suggested that these need to be reconsidered.

- We offer treasure trails and people need to identify where these start easily.

## **Other issues that need to be overcome (not specifically related to Wayfinding)**

### **Parking**

- Lack of parking is a real issue.
- No pre-parking info on the roads leading up in to the town, hence traffic is a problem. Adequate signage required to point out to various car parks in the Town.
- Cars parking in the loading bays cause problems for those wanting to use them for deliveries which results in vans blocking traffic to make a delivery. It could help if people knew which car park was best for each attraction.
- Parking restrictions on the High Street need to be imposed for businesses, and is currently the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council.
- The car park information boards in the area needs to be looked into as most of the car park signs do not show you the relevant information. It is hard to find which is a long stay or a short stay car park.

### **Public Transport**

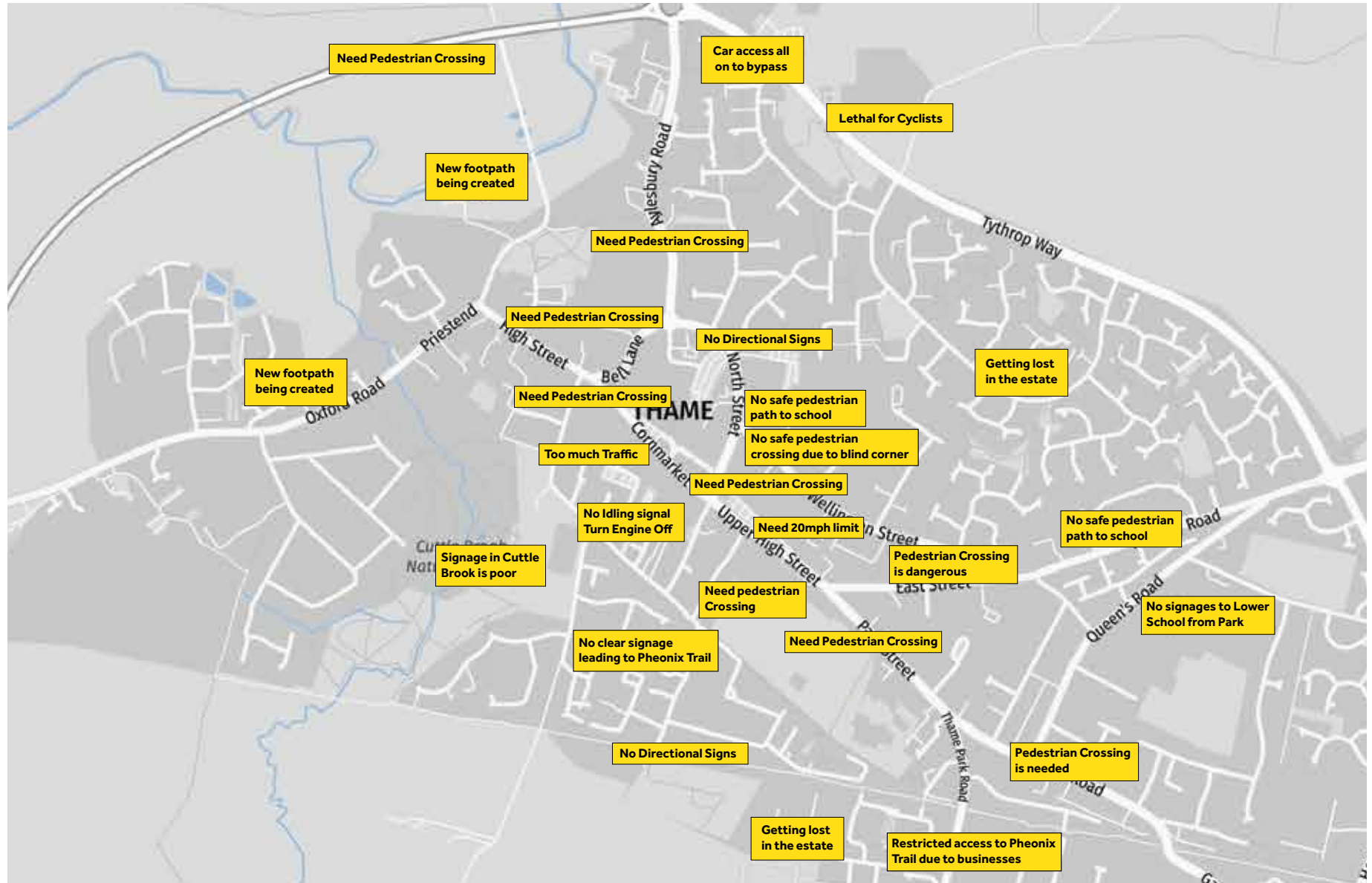
- Connectivity from Public Transport Stations needs to be improved.

### **Other**

- Tuesday Market days and Event days gets crowded and busy.

# Signage Improvement Feedback

During the Stakeholder Meeting on **9<sup>th</sup> September 2019** we had a session where we discussed some key issues people face when walking in Town.



## Factors to consider in development of Wayfinding scheme from Stakeholder discussion

### Residents

- How can we aid the residents with better wayfinding solutions?
- Consider what the Town means to the residents.
- Consider demographic.
- Need to engage with additional stakeholders such as Cuttlebrook Volunteers.

### Useability

- Accessibility & Visibility
- Dementia Friendly
- Some of the streets are not very pedestrian friendly.
- More signage to invite people in, and help them navigate Thame.
- Move people around the Town

### Visitors

- Direct people from the car parks to the Centre: The car park names should be clearer, many people don't know the name of the car park where they are parked so therefore have problems when they need to find it again.
- Tourists who travel to Thame want to visit the museum (largely to connect with the Midsomer Murders offer), and then the centre. They also shop in the High street. There needs to be signs to direct them to museum.
- Potential locations of interest such as the Phoenix Trail need to be better identified.

### Design

- Bespoke - Has to connect with Thame. Needs to be contemporary and artistic while still being sympathetic to the Town's past.
- Architecture could be a design element.
- Need to be visible at night for those contributing to the evening economy (No dark painted signage)
- Use pictograms and minutes for walking.
- Town needs to be ready for change with the new trends and practices.

# Key Places of Interest

## Key Points of Interest

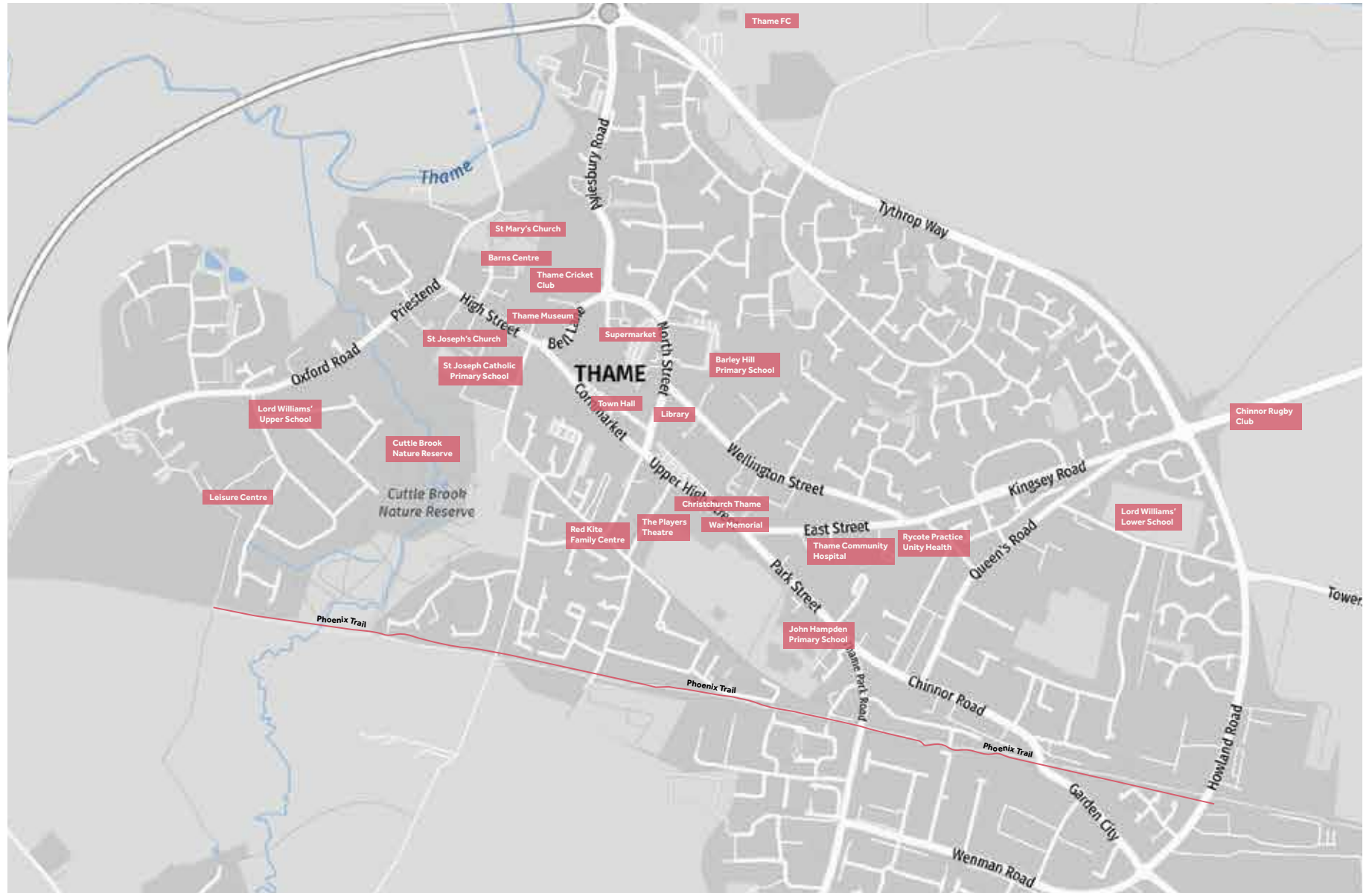
- Town Hall
- Schools
- Library
- Health Centres
- Red Kite Family Centre
- Churches
- War Memorial
- Supermarket
- Barns Centre
- Museum
- The Players Theatre
- Phoenix Trail
- Cuttlebrook Nature Reserve and Southern Road Recreation Ground
- Thame Leisure Centre
- Chinnor Rugby Club
- Thame FC
- Thame Cricket Club
- Thame Sports Club (Bowls & Tennis)

## Additional Points of Interest

- Elms Park
- Ham Wood
- River
- The Moats
- Skate Park
- Market
- Swan Walk
- Greyhound Walk
- Community Hospital
- WC
- Fire Station
- Hotels
- Snooker Club
- Post Office
- ESSO + BP
- Gyms
- Racquets

# Key Places of Interest Map

Key places discussed during the Stakeholder Meeting on **9<sup>th</sup> September 2019** have been plotted on the map.



In order to compile feedback on the experiences with the area and it's signs we created a survey.

We received 280 responses from a wide spectrum of people in Thame.

From the results of this survey we noticed the following key points:

- **57.5%** said that they were based in Thame.
- **61%** have visited the Thame Museum and **92%** say they have visited the Weekly Market.
- **51.5%** said that the heritage of Thame is extremely important with a further **27%** saying that it is very important.
- Only **50%** said that the navigational signs are easy to follow, and 21% have not noticed the signs around.
- **38%** of those polled rate that the town is easy to navigate.
- The three most popular ways to describe Thame are: **friendly, welcoming** and **open**.

These responses corollate with much of what we discussed in the stakeholder meeting.

While most businesses are easy to find in Thame, people say that it is difficult to find **Doctor Surgery, Barns Centre, Phoenix trail** and **Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve**.

So moving forward, the wayfinding strategy needs to:

- Have signs/maps/visual aids at the best location, be easy to follow and be well maintained.
- Include **pictograms** and other **non-text aids** because many visitors do not have English as their first language.
- Keep the **heritage** of the area at the forefront whether it's design, materials and information displayed.
- Improve navigation to and from the car parks and other areas away from the Town Hall and the High Street.

2

Strategy

# Strategy Introduction



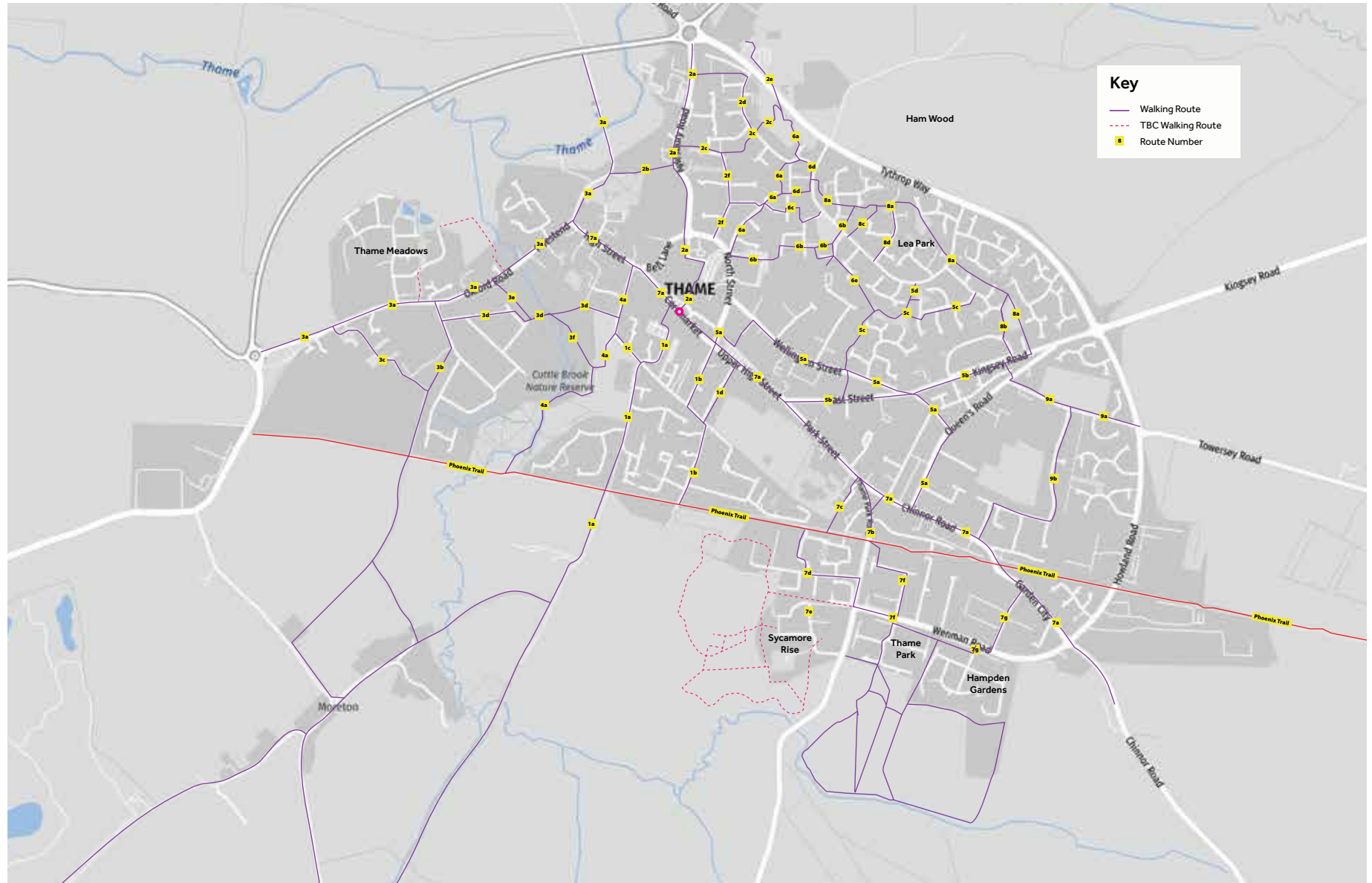
In this section we follow on from our research of Thame with the wayfinding strategy for the town. This strategy lays down our recommendations for the improvement of the wayfinding of Thame.

This is presented through:

- Pedestrian Routes Map
- Decision Points
- Wayfinding map
- Sign locations
- A pedestrian sign family

# Pedestrian Routes Map

This map shows the main routes to access various parts of the Town, During the study of these routes, To aid effective wayfinding for residents and tourists car parks, schools and important locations along the routes were considered in study and planning process.



## **Orientation and navigation**

Navigation from place to place is a fundamental human activity and an integral part of everyday life. Where are you? Where are you heading to? People use their knowledge and previous experiences to find their way in the build environment. The human perception of the build environment and information in a space comes down to balance and focus. What do you see? Why did you see it? What did you do with the information.

## **Wayfinding principles**

Wayfinding has the function to inform people of the surroundings in the (unfamiliar) build environment, it is important to show information at strategic points to guide people into the right directions. Complex structures in the build environment are interpreted and stored by the human memory. Distances, locations and time may be remembered differently than as they appear to be in reality.

An effective wayfinding system is based on human behaviour and consists of the following characteristics:

### **Do not make them think**

Create a comprehensive, clear and consistent visual communication system with concise messaging.

### **Show only what is needed**

Show information what relevant is to the space, location and / or navigation path.

### **Remove excessive information**

Remove unnecessary elements to create a clear visual environment ahead.

There are four important type of signs:

**Information signs**, for instance a signpole will locate a destination and / or orientate yourself in the build environment.

**Directional signs**, where information is displayed to find destinations, located on several strategic points in the build environment.

**Identification signs**, where information about individual locations is displayed such as buildings, locations and public facilities.

**Warning signs**, to indicate safety procedures such as a fire escape routes, no smoking areas and other regulations that is, or is not allowed in a specific area.

To make a signage system work together a design grid is used to order information and to scale the signs to different sizes, as part of the sign family. With the example design I have used a base grid of 30 mm (millimeters) with a subdivision of 9. All the measurements of the example are based on the 9×9 division. Be careful not to show too much information into one sign, this will be easily overlooked, instead use multiple signs to get good wayfinding results.

# Sign Family

The sign family has been designed to fit with the artistic, and cultural aesthetic of the town but also to stand out visually to ensure residents see the signs in order to use them.

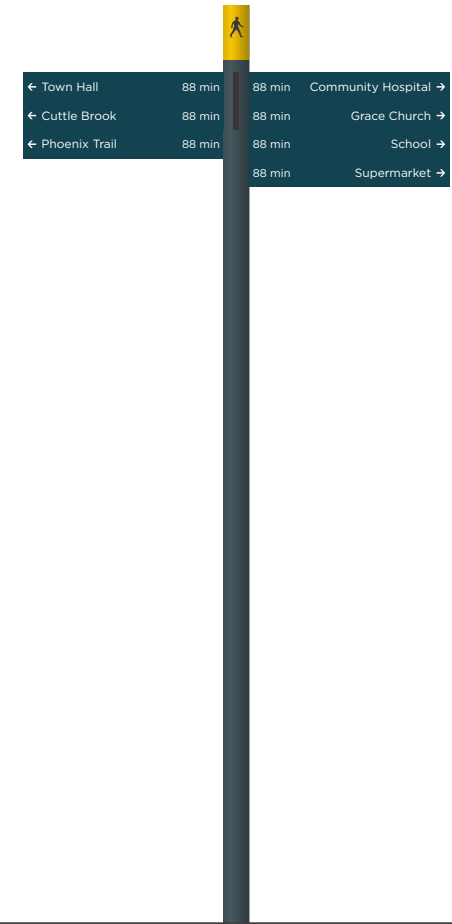
\*Designs are indicative and needs to be worked on with the local art.



**Pedestrian Monolith - PM**



**Info & Map Boards**



**Fingerposts - FP**

## Pedestrian Monolith - PM

These are to be located at key locations where both maps and directions are required.

It is important that these signs are easy to update and can respond to change. There are three main modules to the sign:

- Beacon
- Destination Directions
- Maps & Information
- Footer

These can all be updated separately as and when required.

- The **beacon** is designed to stand out and inform the user of their location, by means of a road name or location name - the road or location name is also displayed on the side of the sign
- The directions are to destinations such as; the key locations (Museum, Barn Centre, etc.), retail areas, key public buildings, toilets and car parks. These are accompanied by relevant pictograms where needed.
- The wayfinding map will clearly display key landmarks and destinations, and be heads-up to give better orientation. There will be a **'you are here'** marker accompanied by a walking distance circle, to give the user a sense of how long their journey will take.

**Pedestrian Monoliths** can be used to provide a range of other information, such as a seasonal event within the area. This can be facilitated by text with a QR code displayed below the map on the interchangeable map panel. This panel is relatively easy and cost effective to change as information needs updating.



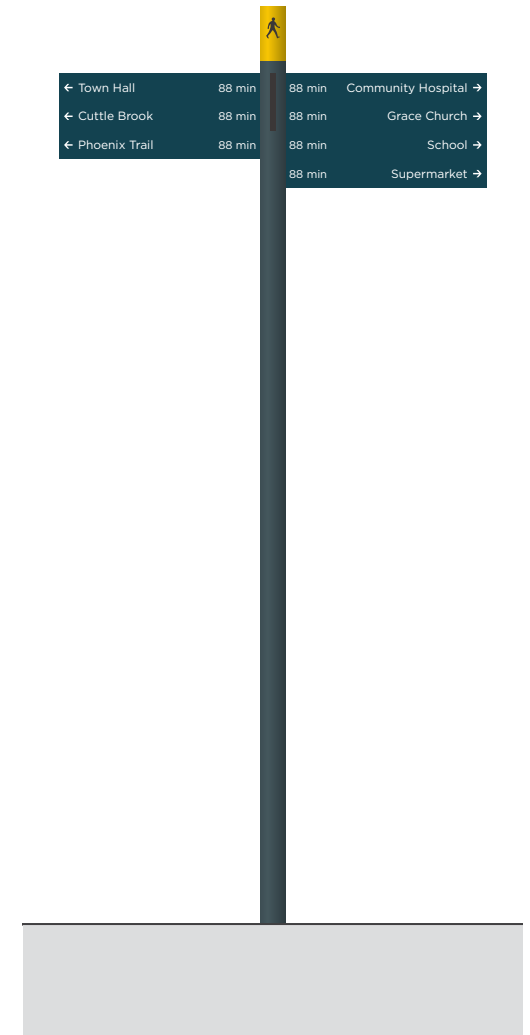
\*Designs are indicative and needs to be worked on with the local art.

## Fingerposts - FP

Fingerposts are to give pedestrians directions and typically located at a decision point where a map is not so important. They are also to help reassure pedestrians on their journey between Pedestrian Monoliths and Information Boards.

Each sign will have a beacon at the top to highlight the sign in the environment.

Each finger directs to a destination or landmark, with an appropriate pictogram where needed and approximate walking time to that destination from location of the sign.



\*Designs are indicative and needs to be worked on with the local art.

## Info & Map Boards

These are to be located at key locations where more information than that displayed on a Pedestrian Monolith is required.

There are two main variations of these signs:

- Directional Info Board - DIB
- Info Board - IB

These three variations can all be used for displaying: large maps, small maps, historic information or poster frames. Just as the Pedestrian Monoliths, it is important that these signs are easy to update and can respond to change. There are four main modules to the sign:

- Beacon
- Destination Directions (Directional Info Board only)
- Maps & Information
- Footer

These can all be updated separately as and when required.

- The beacon is designed to stand out and inform the user of their location, by means of a road name or location name - the road or location name is also displayed on the side of the sign.
- The directions are optional and only relate to the Directional Info Board and would be the according to the same precedent as laid down by the Pedestrian Monoliths.
- The wayfinding map will clearly display key landmarks and destinations, and be heads-up to give better orientation. There will be a 'you are here' marker accompanied by a walking distance circle, to give the user a sense of how long their journey will take.

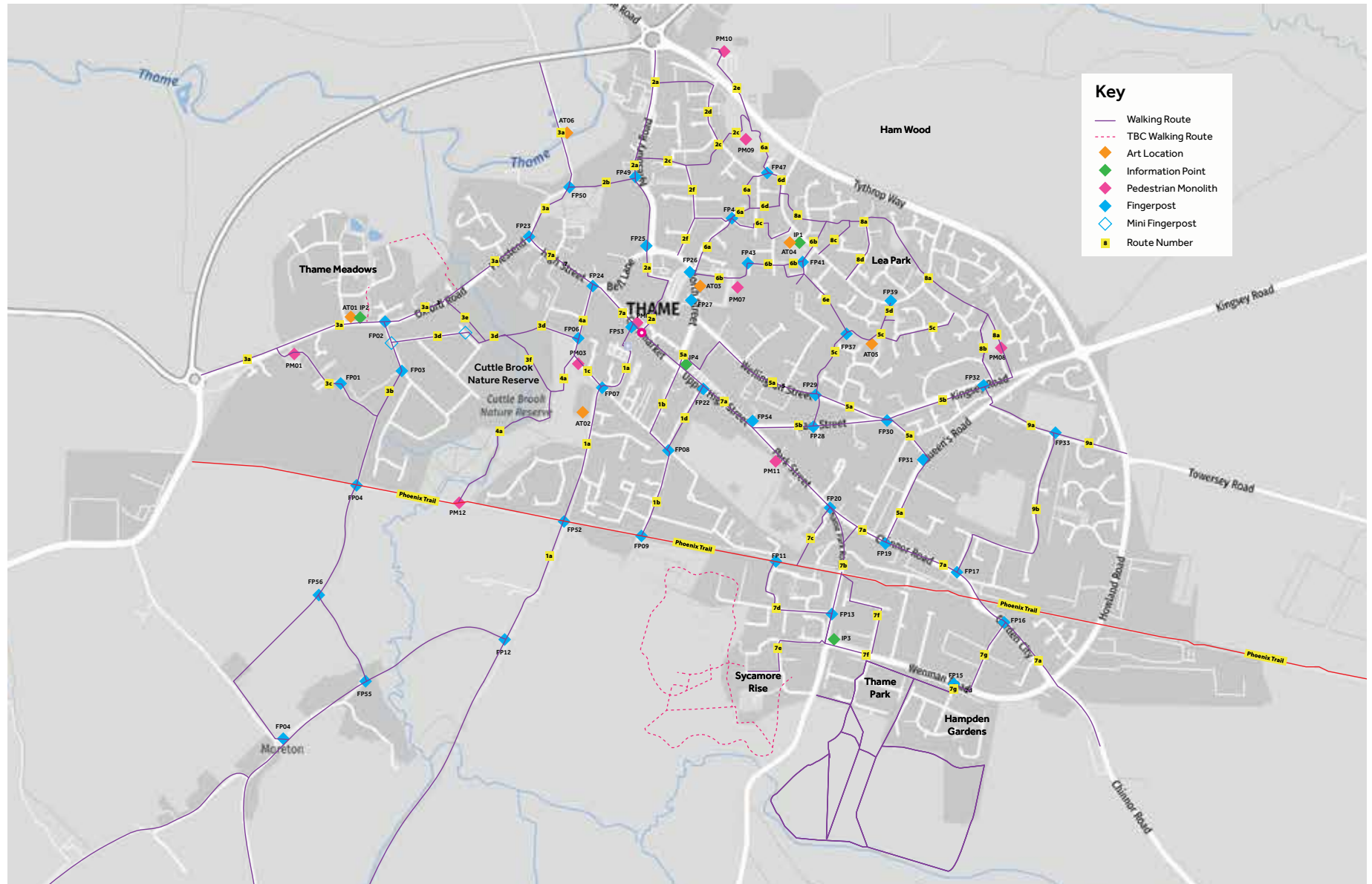
This Information section can also be used to show other information like historic information for that location or even temporary local information, such as local events in a modified variation. For better functionality we could use an interactive screen to advertise local businesses and events. The Ads could be a source of income for the Town Council.



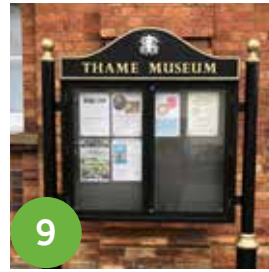
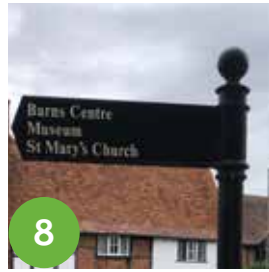
\*Designs are indicative and needs to be worked on with the local art.

# Sign Locations

This map below illustrates the prospective sign locations across Thame.



# Appendix



# Appendix

