

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

Date:	21 March 2023
Title:	Public Art Thame
Contact Officer:	Becky Reid, Environmental Project Officer

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the designs of our second Public Art Trail for Thame as part of the 'Art Leading Wayfinding' project, and to approve the proposed locations of these pieces of art.

Background

2. Thame has been awarded Public Arts Funding through Section 106 agreements in light of new developments in the town. In November 2017, The Town Centre Working Group formed a sub Public Arts Working Group to write a Public Art strategy. The Strategy set out the definition of public art, its value, what needs to be done to ensure the s106 funding is spent appropriately and that the community is involved.
3. The strategy was approved at the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee meeting on Tuesday 25 September 2018, giving the Working Group permission to progress projects proposed in Section 10 of the Strategy, within available funds to completion, in line with the Strategy.
4. Section 10 of the Strategy outlined priority projects. The first project to be delivered was a 'Town-wide wayfinding project that both improves communication routes through the town as well as raising awareness of Thame's Heritage. Included in this connecting all new estates into Thame, but also covering wayfinding throughout the rest of town (covering Lea Park)'.
 - a) A story starting at Thame Meadows estate leading into Thame Town Centre.
 - b) A 'fun fact' trail that will help people navigate their way from Lea Park to the town centre; as well as across Lea Park to the destinations that border it - including the Football Stadium, Skate Park and Rugby ground.
 - c) A poetry trail: this will run from estates on Wenman Road, through the new Elms Park development and on into the town centre.
5. In 2021, following a positive call to artists, and through a competitive interview process, a lead artist – Nicola Henshaw – was selected. The Arts Development Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council, Abigail Brown, guided us through the commissioning process.
6. Nicola commenced her Thame 'Art Leading Wayfinding' project with creative community engagement, involving a wide range of residents. The outcome of this work was a decision to establish 3 trails across Thame, each linking different areas of the town to the Town Centre - to encourage residents to walk more and make more use of the current footpath network. These 3 trails were identified as:
 - a) A story starting at Thame Meadows estate leading into Thame Town Centre.
 - b) A 'fun fact' trail that will help people navigate their way from Lea Park to the town centre; as well as across Lea Park to the destinations that border it - including the Football Stadium, Skate Park and Rugby ground.
 - c) A poetry trail: this will run from estates on Wenman Road, through the new Elms Park development and on into the town centre.
7. The first of these trails has been installed w/c 13th March and the official launch will take place on Saturday 25th March.

Development and approval of designs for Lea Park ‘Fun Fact Trail’

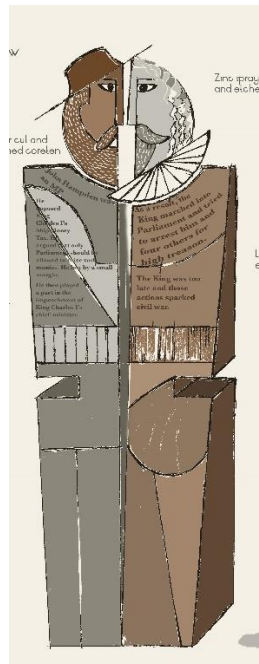
8. The community engagement work done at the start of the project identified the overall aesthetic of all 3 trails.
9. To develop the content of the Fun Fact trail Nicola drew on work completed by the Public Art Working Group when developing Thame's strategy, as well as commissioning further research. She also delivered a workshop with the Year 3 students at Barley Hill Primary School. Alongside this, continual communication with Lea Park Residents Association has consulted them at each step of design development.
10. From this she developed the 'facts' of Lea Park into fun, interactive elements that would encourage children to connect with the artwork. The different elements of the proposed trail are outlined below. They were presented to the Public Art Working Group on Monday 13th March and given full approval, in line with the delegated powers of the Public Art Working Group. They are shown here for reference and to aid making a decision about the proposed locations for the artwork.

Designs and proposed locations for Lea Park ‘Fun Fact Trail’

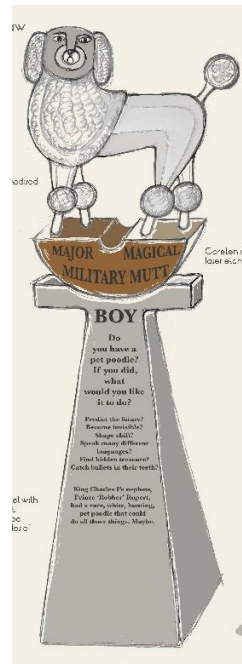
11. There are 5 elements to this public art trail as outlined here:
12. FIRST: Themed way markers: In keeping with the way markers designed for the first story trail from Thame Meadows, four themed way markers have been designed for the fun fact trail, shown below. Each pick up different elements of the Civil War and connect people to Thame’s history, and elements of general Civil War history to people’s lives in Thame today.



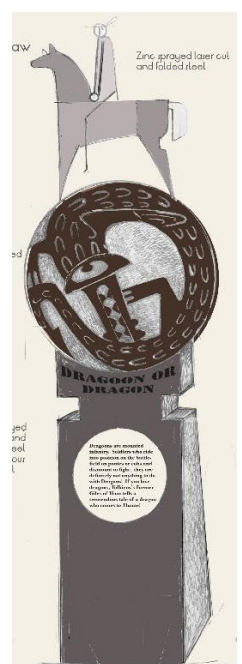
The Moat



John Hampden / King Charles I way marker: Lenthall Green – a key route to John Hampden school from the estate.

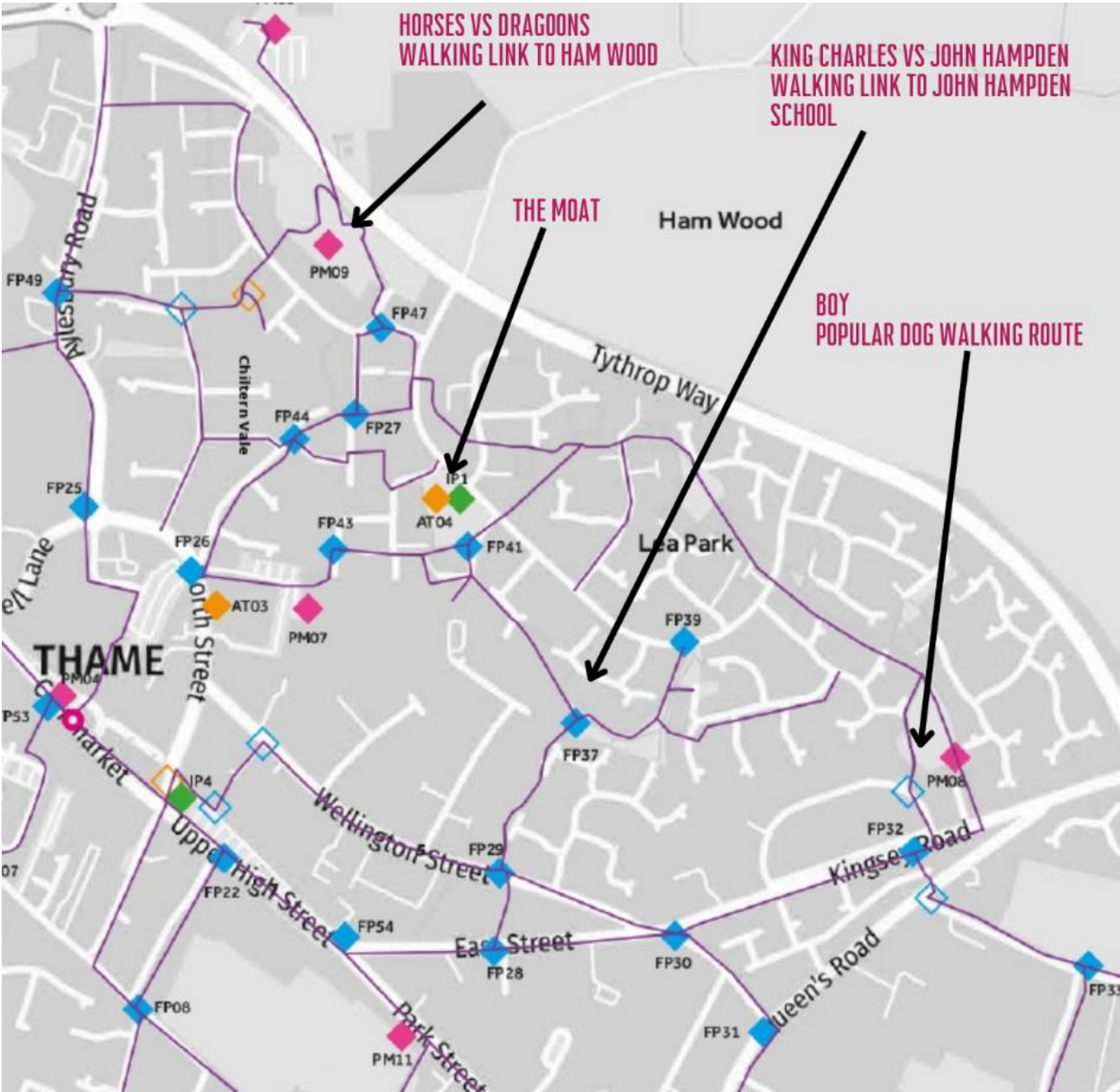


'Boy': Churchill Crescent play area: a regular dog-walking route used by many

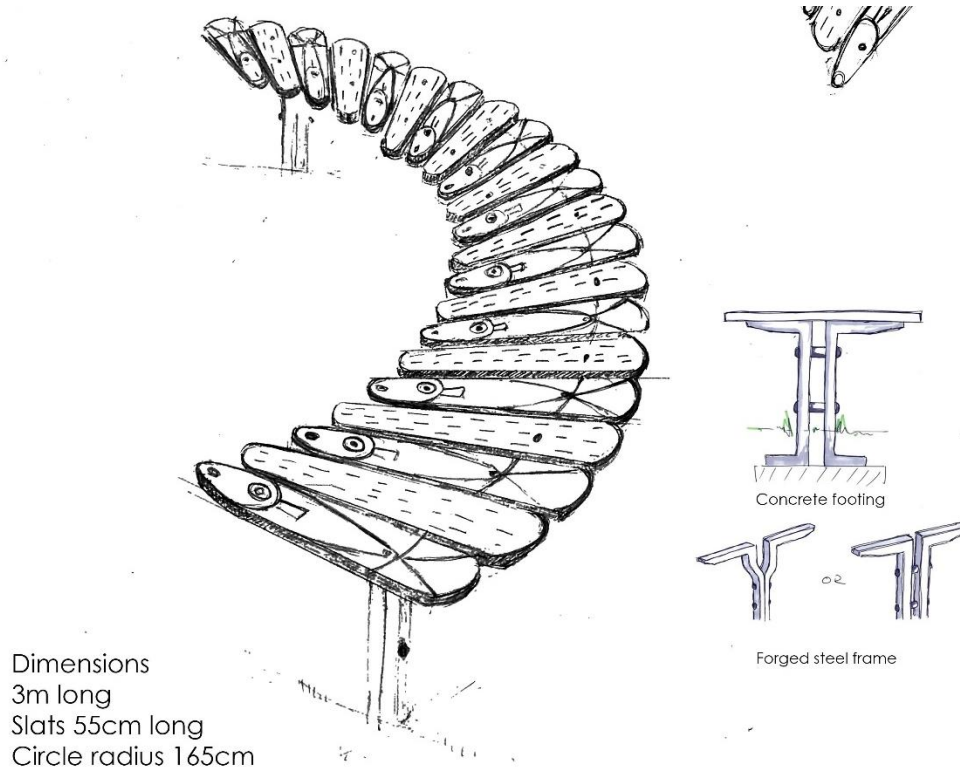


'Horses vs Dragoons / Dragons': Queen Elizabeth Circle: helping people to pick up the route to Ham Wood which is named after 'Farmer Giles of Ham', the Tolkien short story set in Thame that features a dragon.

13. Other than the way marker connected to The Moat (featuring fish), the proposed locations for these way markers are shown on the map below. The proposed locations are 'gateways' to Lea Park – key locations that are found at the edge of the estate.



14. SECOND: A Bench to be located alongside the way marker at The Moat location shown on the map above. The area is regularly used by local children and their parents after school, as well as by those waiting for the bus in this area. It is felt that a bench here would also provide a resting point for those who want to walk into town but cannot do it all in one go. The local police have given permission for this, a consultation will also be carried out with residents whose homes border the area subject to the outcome of the decision made today.



15. THIRD: Railings artwork installation: a request came from Lea Park Residents Association to help people learn more about the relevance of their street names. To incorporate this Nicola ran a workshop with Barley Hill School Year 3 pupils to develop designs for a project that will utilise the school railing that border the footpath through to Lea Park from the Cattle Market car park. Shown below, each panel outlines the reason that street names were chosen by showing their connection to the Civil War. This footpath is owned by Thame Town Council with the installations facing the hedge. The school is keen to see this project implemented subject to relevant permissions being obtained.



16. FOUR: Themed way finding to be mounted on lamp posts. Following the precedence set by the Story Trail, the whole project will include a feather and star icon that was created through workshops in Barley Hill School. Feathers were associated with Cavaliers, stars with Round Heads. This 'symbol' for the trail will help people identify that they are in Lea Park. These will sign post to key locations, as well as help people work their way through the trail if they decide to explore Lea Park by hunting out each way marker. These will be positioned at key locations around the estate to pick up the key routes outline in purple on the map on page 3 of this report.



17. FIVE: Painted bollards around the estate. One of the interesting facts discovered in the research about the Civil War was the documented evidence of men regularly swapping sides. With the Lea Park roads containing names of Cavaliers and Roundheads all muddled together, it has been proposed that a great way to represent this and bring some colour to the estate was to paint some of the bollards the colours associated with each group and use the feather and star symbols interchangeably on the estate. Current locations for this will include bollards at Pym Walk and those at the end of Megan's Walk. But work will be done to identify others. The Rotary Club have offered to help with this work.

Recommendation:

- i) To approve the proposed locations of the 4-way markers***
- ii) To approve the location of the Bench***
- iii) To approve the location of the Railings artwork***