

The Ilminster Forum's Signage Project

During the Ilminster Community Plan process residents, when consulted through the questionnaire and at the various public meetings that were held, expressed concern regarding the abundance of signs in and around the town. Our Chamber of Commerce had also voiced their concern regarding what they saw as a problem that did nothing to improve the image of the town.

In some cases this meant there was too much signage and in others not enough.



Sometimes it was found that in some places a number of signs seemed to have been lumped together indiscriminately and in the process obscured important highway 'warning' signs. There were often examples of duplication of signs all in the same location.



None of this improves the image of a town but when there are signs that are dirty, in poor condition or even broken, the town begins to look run down and seedy.



There was obviously a clearly identified and defined need to improve signage in the town. However, the Forum as an organisation was in no position itself to be able to rectify the problem but it was agreed to make those people who were responsible for signage aware of the situation. So we embarked on a journey of discovery as we surveyed the streets of the town, photographing every sign, noting its location and assessing its condition.

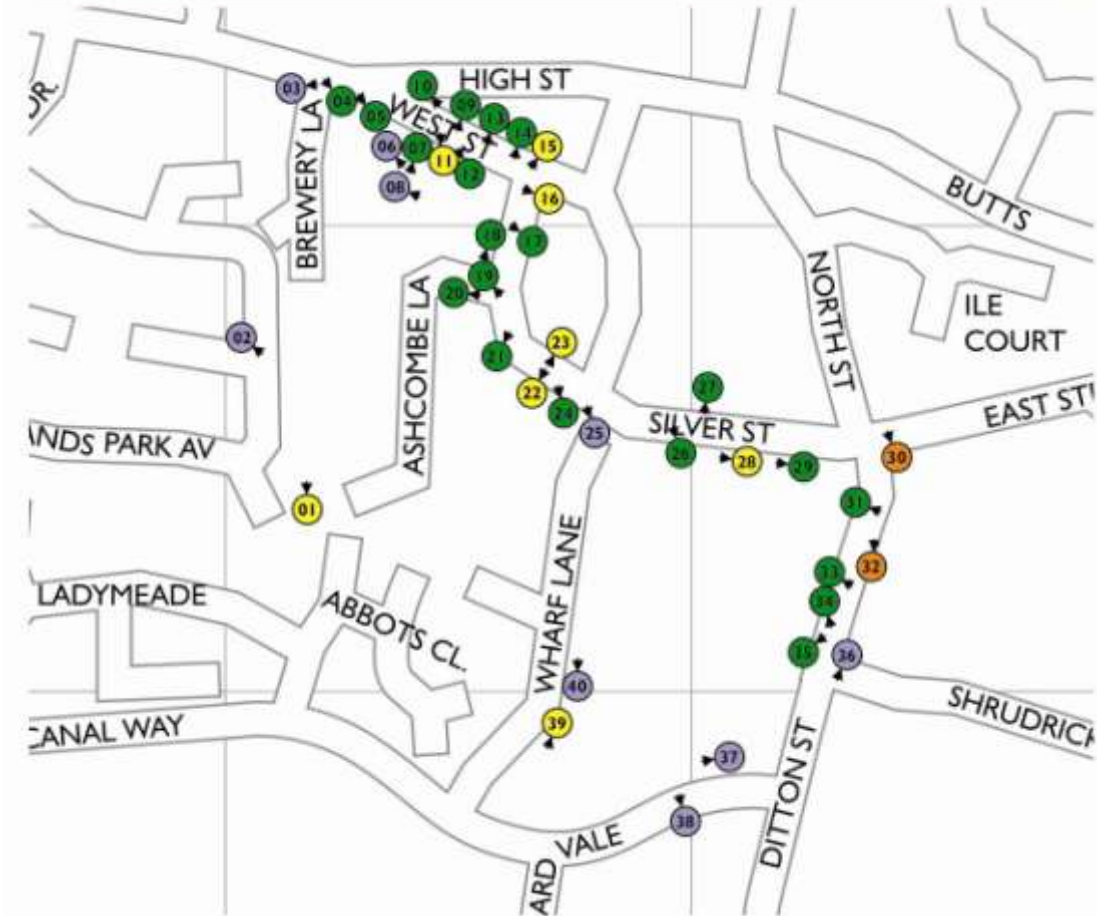
Once this had been done and the streets double-checked to ensure that no signs had been missed – it was amazing just how many signs there were! – the information was passed to our computer expert who put together a ninety seven page A4 book detailing the signage in Ilminster. Letters and emails to council officers although they have their place do not always have a strong enough impact, which is why we chose to produce a ‘picture book’.

The ‘picture book’ format was as follows:


- Front Cover
- Contents
- A map of the whole town
- Section A
- Section B
- Section C
- Section D
- Section E
- Statistics

Each section represented a different area of the town and at the beginning of each section there was an enlarged map of that particular area. The signs within each section/area were numbered and the number marked on the enlarged map (see example below).

West Street, Silver Street & Ditton Street



There then followed, in numerical order, a photograph of each sign together with its location, a description, condition and any comments that were necessary. As can be seen, the condition of signs was a colour coded grading from one to five.

Location: 01	
Description: Wooden Footpath sign	
Condition: 3	Good 1 2 3 4 5 Poor
Comments:	
Base of the signpost has rotted, and now the signpost has a significant lean.	

Comments added not only described the actual condition of signs but in some cases queried the need for a particular sign

Location: 29	
Description: Direction sign	
Condition: 3	Good 1 2 3 4 5 Poor
Comments:	
Signs are extremely dirty , top sign is obscured by the over hanging tree. Weight restriction sign is in good order	



During the course of the work it was discovered that the document we had produced would have to go to at least two agencies. In Area West of South Somerset the District Council are responsible for street names



and the County Highways Department is in charge of all the other signs. It was also decided to provide the Town Clerk with a copy of the document as his dealings with the public sometimes involve complaints regarding signs and our picture book would provide him with a means of identifying exactly what the caller was talking about.