

INFRASTRUCTURE AUDIT



9.

ABBNEY FIELDS INFRASTRUCTURE AUDIT 2021

The infrastructure audit focuses attention on all the existing infrastructure i.e. furniture and shelters etc within Abbey Fields, looking at their condition, their legibility, their function and their consistency. Further to the audit, a series of recommendations identify improvements that can be made over time to the infrastructure within Abbey Fields, for example, uniformity of furniture, clearance of clutter, cleaning furniture etc. These have then been fed into the Actions for the Fields. The audit has been prepared identifying the infrastructure within each zone within the Fields.

CAR PARK

The car park has many different identities as it is the main vehicular and pedestrian access to Abbey Fields, the Leisure Centre and St Nicholas Church. Unfortunately, there is a confusing approach to the welcome of this space.

The welcome sign to Abbey Fields is too small, faces only one way on Bridge Street, and holds far too much information. It cannot be read by vehicles as the main welcome typeface of cream on green disappears and the rest is too small to be read from a vehicle. It appears to be a welcome sign for pedestrians in a location not readily accessed by pedestrians, except for those on the pavement. However, the pavement has low footfall as access to the Fields is generally under Bridge Street or via other entrances. In contrast, the welcome sign to St Nicholas Church is bold and clear, if a little dated.



The entrance and exit from the car park along Bridge Street have 'in' and 'out' and 'no entry' signs. However, there is a great deal of clutter at the entrance with left over posts of past entrance signs that were never removed. New signs have been put in place behind these and altogether make the entrance look untidy.



Other signage in the car park differs from the Church and Fields welcome signs.

Car park signage with a different welcome sign and two pay at machine signs. The machine signs are convoluted, with too much information, too many blocks of signs on one notice board that only relate to the car park payment system.



A dated fingerpost for the Fields has been placed in a poorly accessible location and one that is easily missed by pedestrians as it is within the main vehicle entrance to the car park, not used by pedestrians; painted black, it is easily missed. The fingerpost is generally not seen until you leave the car park by vehicle or leave the play facility/Leisure Centre along the Main Drive. The fingerpost does not direct to the Leisure Centre, play area or the lake, key features of the Fields.



Car park related signs are generally located in appropriate places and include car park security and disabled parking signage. Additional posts for the disabled bay signs may be unnecessary when additional bollards are located nearby and signs can be attached to these.

Other signage includes a timber 'News and Events' board that would benefit a refresh. It is in relatively good condition, although may require some treatment. However, the information within it is haphazard and covers mainly 'what not to do' within the Fields. The information of positive interest are lost as a result.



There are bollards of different styles located in the car park. They are all made of timber but vary in style. Consistency of bollards throughout the entire Fields is important.





The car park entrance lacks definition as the main entrance to Abbey Fields and is degraded by additional fly posters and signage clutter some of which could be located within the noticeboard.



Lighting of the car park is from flood lights located to its perimeter, one of which is shared with a street lamp. A street lamp is also located adjacent to Church Walk and is permanently on, presumably because it is located under trees at the pay station near to the pedestrian entrance to the Fields. The sustainability aspect of these lights needs to be considered.



Recommendations for Car Park:

1. **Tidy up the main vehicle entrance by removing all unnecessary poles and ensuring 'in', 'out' and 'no entry' signs are at the same level and clearly visible. These would benefit being affixed to the wall as opposed to poles to improve the overall appearance of the car park entrance.**
2. **Change the welcome sign to the Fields and have a double fronted bold sign to face both directions of the Bridge Street.**
3. **News and events board to contain only information pertinent to news and events and not on rules and regulations of the Fields. The information needs to be much bolder and clearer to read. Refresh printing regularly where it fades in sunlight.**
4. **Parking signage to be recessive to the Fields welcome signage. The parking signage needs to be more concise and less cluttered.**
5. **Have Welcome signs to the main pedestrian Fields entrances that provide a Fields map, information, do's, with some important don'ts to create a positive welcoming feel to Abbey Fields from the car park.**
6. **Bollards and bins to be all of one style throughout the Fields and regularly cleaned.**
7. **Fingerposts to be located in visible pedestrian locations and be of a modern style but not stainless or brushed steel as this is not the character of the Fields.**





CHURCH & ABBEY

St Nicholas Church colours are mauve and set the church apart from Abbey Fields. However, the signs differ in style, age and colour.

Seating within the church and Abbey ruins has varying styles, materials, colours and condition. All require some level of repair/refresh.



Bins vary between the church and the abbey ruins area. Standard mesh bins are used within the churchyard and amenity bins are located elsewhere. The amenity bins are soiled. Both bins have erosion to the ground around them from substantial use.



Historical information signage on the Abbey Ruins is complementary but can appear too discrete, too high and sometimes can be missed. Reading the information from a distance, at height or when the panels are soiled or in the ground can be difficult.





A sign detailing the history of the site is located by The Barn/Museum. It is suffering degradation, is heavily soiled, with cracks

and damage. There is much wear to the base of the signage showing its popularity despite its condition.



A dated finger post located near to the primary entrance of the church off High Street has no information in relation to the Fields. It is dark and hidden within the confines of a mature tree.



The gated access off High Street appears to be a double leaf gate although the pedestrian gate is purposefully missing. However, it is not noticeable and allows open pedestrian and disabled access but restricts vehicles. The style of the gate is in keeping with the Fields and the wider area.

A plaque from the Gatehouse detailing dated information is not visible as it is located behind security bars. Relocating this on the building would be beneficial.



Other signs include dog fowl signs, Garden of Remembrance and security/safety signs. The garden of remembrance sign is loose and not set into the ground. The safety signs are very clear, although do detract from the ruins.

Access infrastructure elsewhere jars with the historic elements of the Church, Abbey Fields, and High Street.





Recommendations for Church & Abbey:

1. Ensure that the church signage is consistent. Where it is located on entrances off High Street, signage for the Fields should also be incorporated in accordance with the Fields's design code.
2. Change all benches within the churchyard to traditional timber benches, relocating metal style benches to other locations within the Church and Abbey zone. Refurbish existing timber benches to ensure they remain in serviceable condition. Continue with a programme of refurbishment.
3. Bins to be cleaned and located next to footways to reduce erosion. Ensure consistency of bin styles throughout the Fields, confirmed in the design code. Mesh bins should be replaced within the cemetery and consideration of sustainability encouraged to reduce plastic waste, with green waste recycling for flowers.
4. Historical information signage to be cleaned and made more accessible/visible. This may require small lecterns or posts.
5. Refix the dated plaque to the Gatehouse ruin.
6. Ensure all signage within the cemetery is not loose and is located appropriately.
7. Improve legibility of the Abbey Ruins particularly around the church. A lectern of information would be of benefit near to the main church entrance.
8. The long distance Centenary Way footpath traverses the church yard. Small waymarkers appropriately located would be of benefit to direct through the churchyard.
9. Fingerposts to be located in visible pedestrian locations and be of a modern style but not stainless or brushed steel as this is not the character of the Fields.
10. Access 'A' frame gate to Church Walk to be replaced with more appropriate, less visually intrusive gates, although with some reflective capacity.
11. Determine whether the safety roadside barrier on High Street would be required following works to hedges. If required, consider replacement with more 'artistic' design.
12. Remove/grind out all metal studs on church/ abbey wall and make safe.



NORTHERN BANK

Access to northern bank is via two entrances off High Street. One entrance, a secondary historic entrance, has a double leaf gate with a trombone handle, a style that works well with the Fields and limits vehicle access with a removable, lockable bollard. The other entrance, a primary entrance, is open to pedestrians restricting vehicle access using a timber bollard/fence post.



There is only one bin within this zone of the Fields located at the primary entrance off High Street. The bin is well used, soiled and graffitied, with much erosion to its base. The street bin as seen above is of a different colour, but similar in style. There are no other bins throughout this zone.



Seating varies with a number of styles throughout and within proximity to this area. Benches in popular locations have substantial erosion and wear to their

base often making the seat height greater than the recommended height.



Fencing in this location is post and two rail as seen above. It is in good condition along its length and provides visual permeability into the

Fields but restricts access to the main entrance points.

Recommendations for Northern Bank:

1. **Replace metal benches with timber benches in line with the Fields's design code. Ensure all existing timber benches are refurbished and that replacement is in line with the Field's design code.**
2. **Clean and maintain existing bin and locate within hard surfacing to reduce erosion. Ensure bin style is consistent with the Fields's design code.**
3. **Widen the primary entrance off High Street and ensure any bollards introduced are consistent with the Fields's design code.**
4. **Introduce Fields welcome sign to primary entrance in accordance with design code.**
5. **Introduce way markers for the Centenary Way long distance route. These could be incorporated into the welcome sign.**





LAKE

The entrance to the lake is cluttered with mismatching benches, and three entrance signs.

The welcome sign to Abbey Fields is too small, soiled and showing signs of wear. It is a welcome sign for pedestrians on a busy primary entrance, but also on a busy road with passing visitors to Kenilworth Castle. As a vehicle welcome sign, it faces only one way on Castle Road, and passing visitors to the castle or people driving past would not be able to read the sign as the typeface of cream on green disappears and the rest is too small to be read from a vehicle.

As a pedestrian sign the message becomes lost within the sign as it holds too much information and there is no map of the Fields. However, there is substantial information about 'What not to do' i.e. byelaws and safety information that any positive message of what you can do is lost. Its location as an information welcome sign is also outside of the Fields boundary and context is lost.



Two other signs located at this primary entrance compete for attention and clutter the main entrance. They are both soiled and damaged with rusty legs. The signs provide visitor information to historic sites within Abbey Fields and the wider area and both include maps. The information provided could be combined into one sign. There is much erosion to the base of both signs, so both are readily reviewed.



The main entrance to the lake is through a hooped chicane barrier that is old with peeling paint. The chicane barriers make access difficult for disabled users in wheelchairs, mobility scooters and prams. It is a pedestrian unfriendly access. Maintenance access is via a field gate with lockable bollard.



Seating around the lake is of varying styles. There are a number of benches located around the lake of similar styles. In this zone a traditional timber bench is only seen outside of the Castle Road entrance, with a mix of timber plank style benches and green metal benches located around the lake (all slightly different with different lengths and struts). A perch bench is only located at the Leisure Facility.



Bins are only located at the main entrance on Castle Road. Both bins are heavily soiled, but



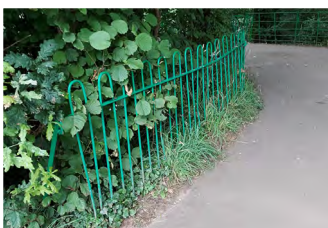
well used as there is much erosion to their base. Surprisingly there is very little litter in the Fields. The bin outside of the entrance is a recycling bin and is traditional in style. Many of the stickers are falling off and it looks old and unpleasant to use. The bin inside the entrance is an open topped bin that is rusty, old and equally unpleasant to use.



A section of trim train lies inside the main entrance to the lake. This appears well used with clear signage on the method of use. However, it appears it is used as a seat or balancing beam.



There are a number of different types of fencing used within the vicinity of the lake. These are all to prevent access.



They include timber palisade hit and miss fence, post and 2 rail fence, bow top fence, estate type fence as well as railings to the main entrance off Castle Street.

Recommendations for Lake:

1. **Change the welcome sign to the Fields and have a large sign to face Castle Road. This should be consistent with the entrance sign at the main car park entrance.**
2. **Update the historical information lectern in line with the Fields's design code and locate it inside the Fields entrance.**
3. **Have a welcome sign inside the Fields entrance that provides a Fields map, information, the 'do's' and create a positive welcoming feel to Abbey Fields.**
4. **Widen the entrance and replace the hooped chicane with a bollard entrance. Ensure any bollards introduced are consistent with the Fields's design code.**
5. **Ensure all benches around the lake are metal framed benches in line with the Fields's design code. Ensure all benches are set within a permanent base, approved by Historic England, in line with the access audit to reduce erosion. Benches outside of the Fields entrance to be consistent and to be metal but must be the same. Widening and redesign of the entrance may determine that these benches should be located within the Fields. All timber benches to be relocated to South Brook or Northern Bank within the Fields. Refurbish existing benches where required.**
6. **Provide a wildlife interpretation panel along the northern lake edge.**
7. **Regularly clean and maintain existing bins and locate within tarmac to reduce erosion. Replace bins and ensure the bin style is consistent with the Fields's design code.**
8. **Consistency of fencing throughout the Fields is of importance. Replace bow top fencing with estate style fencing. This should be painted a recessive black. Ensure any new fencing incorporated within the Leisure Facility is in accordance with the Fields's design code.**
9. **Introduce estate railing with stock proof mesh fencing along Finham Brook providing two locations for pedestrian/dog access.**



SOUTH BROOK

The entrances to south brook include a kissing gate off Castle Road, and a hooped barrier off Borrowell Lane. The kissing gate is in good order but provides a pinch point to the Fields with extensive erosion. The hooped barrier is in a poor state of repair with flaking paint and is a pedestrian unfriendly access. Adjoining it is a maintenance access field with gate and posts showing signs of deterioration.



Two timber bridges form important connections across Luzley Brook. They both appear to be in good condition, although would require regular inspection by a structural engineer to look for signs of deterioration.



Post and 2 rail fences are used around the Fields to control movement and in most instances is in good condition. At the kissing gate as seen above, the fence is post and 3 rail creating greater height.



Seating in this part of the Fields is mostly timber benches with one traditional metal bench set in slabs at the transition between this zone and Hillside. There is substantial erosion around the timber benches set within earth. The benches are showing signs of wear. Paint is also damaged on the traditional bench.



One soiled dog bin is located near to the entrance to the Fields. There are no other bins along this route.

Recommendations for South Brook:

1. **Provide a pedestrian welcome sign at the primary entrance off Castle Road and at Borrowell Lane consistent with other primary entrances. At Castle Road this should be located inside of the entrance and not to conflict with the main welcome sign that will be visible at the lake entrance.**
2. **Replace the kissing gate with a bollard entrance, ensuring all bollards used are in line with the Fields's design code.**
3. **Replace the secondary entrance at Borrowell Lane with a double leaf field gate with trombone latch similar to secondary access on High Street.**
4. **Regularly inspect the bridges to ensure they remain safe and serviceable.**
5. **Widen the primary access on Borrowell Lane and provide bollard restriction in line with the design code.**
6. **Refurbish or replace existing timber benches in line with the Fields's design code. Refurbish metal bench in line with design code.**
7. **Site all benches in hard standing, subject to Historic England approval and connect to the main path network to reduce erosion.**
8. **Remove all dog bins and introduce litter bins to all primary entrances.**



HILLSIDE

Pedestrian entrances to Hillside include timber bollards, although of varying styles, size and condition. Most are in good condition.

Maintenance vehicles access Hillside via a number of field gates with lockable removable bollards. All field gates appear in good condition.



The signage relating to the Abbey is located under trees and is heavily soiled by birds. It is showing signs of damage and deterioration and is unpleasant to read. A dated finger post at the main entrance only includes directions to historic or town centre locations and does not include any user information relating to the Fields. It is also dark and blends in with the heavy shade created. Seating in Hillside is more of a traditional Victorian style.



There are a number of types of bench styles that are identified here, with one historic bench that requires refurbishment. The orange benches stand out and become a focal point, at odds with the nature of the site and the views it presents. Most are in need of repainting, with some requiring repair and cleaning. The bases of the benches vary with some located in tarmac and others in concrete slabs. Where benches are located on grassed areas, there is substantial erosion outside of the slabbed base.

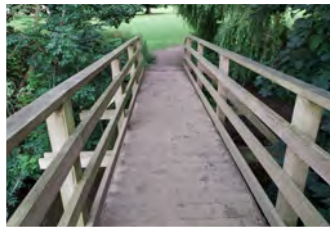


There are a number of bins located within and to the immediate outskirts of this zone. Each bin is different and there is no consistency throughout this area. The bins are all soiled and dated in style. The dog bin and recycling bin look very well used.





A timber constructed bridge traverses Finham Brook into the Play and Leisure zone. It is a narrow bridge but appears in good condition. It takes a large volume of footfall as the erosion is extensive on the approaches either side.



There are two bus shelters located within/ adjacent to this zone. Both shelters have timber roof tiles and are well constructed. However, they are in need of repair and refurbishment. Some of the main structural posts are rotten at the base of both structures

and need to be professionally repaired before they become dangerous. The paint is peeling and is exposing bare wood, that will then become subject to further decline. Some wooden tiles are also missing. These are very well used structures and need some attention.



Recommendations for Hillside:

1. **Provide a vehicle welcome sign to the Fields at the War memorial entrance. This should be at a low level to not compete with the war memorial. Pedestrian information signs to provide a Fields map, information, 'do's' and create a positive welcoming feel to Abbey Fields. These need to be carefully located to avoid visual clutter.**
2. **Update the historical information lectern in line with the Fields's design code and locate it near to a main path, preferably on Holmes Avenue, away from trees. Should it be located under trees, regular cleaning is required.**
3. **Bollards and bins to be replaced and to be all of one style throughout the Fields and regularly cleaned. Replace all dog bins with litter bins.**
4. **Fingerposts to be located in visible pedestrian locations and to be of a modern style but not stainless or brushed steel as this is not the character of the Fields. Ensure they direct to Fields facilities as well as historic reference points.**
5. **All benches to be traditional metal style. These should all be painted a uniform consistent dark colour. Orange colours to be phased out. Refurbish historic bench to a high standard. All benches to be regularly cleaned.**
6. **Potential to widen the bridge over Finham Brook.**
7. **Regularly inspect the bridge to ensure it remains safe and serviceable.**
8. **Repair and paint the bus shelters.**



PLAY & LEISURE

There are a number of signs located around the Play and Leisure area. A sign detailing the history of the site is located at the entrance to the Main Drive and is set under trees. It is suffering degradation, is heavily soiled, with cracks and damage. There is much wear to the base of the signage showing its popularity despite its condition.

Signs for the play area are distinctive although one sign located under a tree is difficult to read due to algal growth.



A second News and Events board is located on the Leisure Centre building but is showing signs of significant weather damage and wear. The information within it is haphazard and covers mainly 'what not to do' within the Fields. Any news of interest is lost as a result. The Friends of Abbey Fields have a separate noticeboard to the news and events board. That noticeboard is smaller than the main news and events board. This additional noticeboard is confusing and undermines the purpose of the larger notice board.



The butterfly garden has a framed picture of butterflies. The frame is showing signs of wear and

the information is tired and dated.

The trim trail is a modern and bright sign of relatively new condition. It provides clear information for the locations of the trim trail and is set on timber posts.



The trim trail is positioned near to the tennis courts. It is in good condition but does not appear to have a great deal of use for its intended purpose. During all site visits, this was never seen to be in use.



Smaller informative signs are located on lampposts around this zone. Their information varies and create masses of confusing clutter that are generally missed and not read.



Seating in the play and leisure zone varies substantially. There are a number of picnic benches located within the grassed areas of the Play and

Leisure zone. Some are within the Church & Abbey zone, but these will be covered within this section. These are well used but showing signs of substantial wear and deterioration. There are no accessible picnic benches for disabled users and all bases to picnic benches set within grass have substantial erosion. Metal benches are showing signs of wear and require refurbishment.



Seating within the fenced play enclosure includes picnic benches, but also a whole range of styles some playful and characterful. However, many of the standard benches within the meadow have substantial deterioration and need repair or replacement. There is excessive concrete bases to the playful benches in the play area which detract from the quality of the area.



Bins vary in style and condition. There are a number of open topped bins located in the area. They are dated, soiled and often rusty. There is much erosion to their base. The bins adjacent to the play area entrance are soiled, but well used and in reasonable condition. The recycling bin is tucked under the eaves of the Leisure Facility near to the outdoor kiosk. It is heavily soiled and unpleasant to use. There are no bins within the fenced play area and litter is notably increased in this area.



There are a number of fences around the Play and Leisure zone. The post and 3 rail fence around the play facility also incorporates a mesh fence. They are in relatively good condition. A post and 2 rail fence provides a protection around the rain garden.



The tennis courts fencing is a chain link fence and is showing signs of age and wear. It is a dated form of enclosure for tennis courts and posts are bending and beginning to fail.



Barriers at Bridge Street are used to direct the movement of pedestrians. Barriers are also located at the historic iron bridge over Finham Brook which is narrow and a severe pinch point at the Leisure Facility.





The access gates for the fenced play appear in good condition but need to be monitored to ensure they self-close due to the proximity of the Main Drive.



Lighting is present within this location. Much of it is located as downlights on the sides of the Leisure Facility. Along Main Drive there are a number of lighting columns with new LED lighting heads. These appear in reasonable condition. Most of the Fields is not lit, except for the busier pedestrian routes required for use outside of

daylight hours, such as the Church access and Main Drive. Their style is recessive and serviceable for the Fields.

There are a number of timber bollards located along Main Drive to limit access and to protect fencing. These are of similar style and in reasonable condition. Bollards will need to be consistent with the rest of the Fields.



There are a number of posts under Bridge Street that appear to be old fence posts. They are gnarly and old, but add character to this location. They may need to be removed at some point as they are rotting at the base.



Cycle parking at the Leisure Centre is located underneath the overhang of the roof. Some of the cycle hoops are bent and damaged. Replacement cycle provision is likely to be included in the Leisure Centre development.



The pavilion within the fenced play area is boarded up and showing substantial signs of deterioration particular to the support posts. It is a barrier within the play area and creates a focal point for antisocial behaviour due its lack of positive use.



Access along Main Drive is through a utilitarian style barrier, with additional lockable 'A' frame gate. The barrier jars with the style of the Fields and provides an unattractive focal point.



Recommendations for Play & Leisure:

1. Have Welcome signs to the Fields entrances that provide a Fields map, information, do's and create a positive welcoming feel to Abbey Fields.
2. News and events board to contain only information pertinent to news and events and not on rules and regulations of the Fields. The information needs to be much bolder and clearer to read. Refresh printing regularly where it fades in sunlight. Combine the Friends of the Fields noticeboard into the main news board.
3. Reduce sign clutter on lamp posts.
4. Undertake a lighting review to ensure lighting of Main Drive and the church is adequate and sustainable.
5. All signage within the Fields to be updated and consistent with the Fields's design code.
6. Bollards and bins to be all of one style throughout the Fields and all bins to be kept clean.
7. Fingerposts to be located in visible pedestrian locations and be of a modern style but not stainless or brushed steel as this is not the character of the Fields. Ensure they direct to Fields facilities as well as historic reference points. Finger posts to be located within the centre of the Fields.
8. All benches to be metal except for within the fenced play where benches can be a mix of timber and metal. All in accordance with the Fields's design guide.
9. Replace all picnic benches and ensure they are on erosion mats (allowing for establishment time) to reduce surface wear. Provide a number of accessible picnic benches for wheelchair users adjacent to existing paths (potentially located within Church & Abbey zone). Picnic benches to be in accordance with the Fields's design code.
10. Refurbish/refresh all benches within this zone in accordance with the Fields's design code.
11. Regularly inspect the bridges to ensure they remain safe and serviceable.
12. Refurbish the tennis courts and replace all fencing.
13. Repair or replace broken or rotten play equipment (including 'mole' within the meadow') to encourage positive engagement with the play space. Broken and damaged play equipment may encourage antisocial behaviour.
14. Provide interpretation of the meadow flowers and likely insects.
15. Potential to relocate the trim trail to Northern bank or the Lake to encourage more active use in these locations.
16. Refurbish and repurpose the play area pavilion as a potential 'snack shack', and/or Seasonal wildlife/educational/art exhibitions.
17. Provide interpretation of the rain garden, using signage in accordance with the design code
18. Consider alternative vehicle access to Main Drive to replace the barrier to improve pedestrian permeability.