

The Pound

As a spinoff to the Lidl supermarket development, the footway fronting the Pound has been widened. This has helped to make the Pound more prominent – and hopefully more appreciated.

A bit of background at this point will not come amiss. Our Pound (or the more often used term pinfold,) is one of only two remaining in the whole of Suffolk. This, if nothing else, makes it rather special and as such is listed Grade II. Over the past few years the building had fallen into a somewhat neglected condition, but has recently been sensitively and carefully repaired and is now a structure to be respected as it reflects an important aspect of our history; and of the marshes which surrounded most of the town, which in turn have contributed to the town's prosperity.

What we do **not** appreciate in the recent work is the placing of concrete bollards close to the building. Their purpose is well intended in offering protection to the building from vehicle impact, but unfortunately they give the impression of being part of the building. We also question the use of concrete bollards – concrete does not seem an appropriate material within the setting of a listed building.

To our minds the bollards need to be at the edge of the footway, protecting not only the pound but also the pedestrians on this narrow and tight corner. As it now stands there is almost an invitation for vehicles to cross the footway!

It is worth adding that the Society has edited and republished the small booklet on the Pound, originally written by the late E W (Ted) Goodwyn and A W Crisp. It will be on sale soon but a copy is available now in the local history section of the library.

We expressed our concern on this issue to Suffolk Highways, and asked Beccles Town Council and Suffolk Preservation Society for their support.

The Director of the latter organisation has taken up this matter with the Cabinet member of Suffolk CC and her response is appended below:-

Dear Councillor Read,

I am contacting you in response to an email from Paul Fletcher, chair of the Beccles Society regarding the installation of concrete bollards in front of the recently restored Pinfold, an 18th century red brick animal pound which is listed grade II. I attach the image that Mr Fletcher has forwarded to me for your information.

Whilst we fully understand the need for highway safety, for both vehicle users and pedestrians, we are disappointed that the work carried out is insensitive in terms of the location, number and appearance of the bollards. The Pinfold is of national importance and its setting is a matter that must be given special regard. The erection of so many white concrete bollards, in such close proximity to the listed structure fails to pay any regard to its historic significance or recently restored appearance. Can you confirm whether the conservation officer was consulted on the works and if so what was the advice that was given? In the event that the appropriate in house conservation expertise was not consulted, I would be grateful if you could clarify the processes that your highway officers follow in these cases affecting heritage assets.

In the past few months the SPS has been contacted by a number of local councils and residents, as well as community groups, raising concerns about highway works in sensitive locations. For example, the recent loss of cobbles in Bury St Edmunds in favour of tarmac, the give way arrangements in Water Street in Lavenham and the duplication of road signs in Beccles town centre. All of these cases relate to designated heritage assets and affect some of the most important historic sites in the county. It is increasingly apparent that the council's adopted Suffolk Conservation Manual, which sets out the adopted good practice for highways works in conservation areas, is no longer being followed.

As I am sure you will agree, one of Suffolk's greatest assets is its internationally outstanding concentration of built heritage. The SPS is concerned that the need for sensitivity in our historic towns and villages is not being given due weight by the county's highway engineers. I would be grateful if you would respond to the concerns raised and to offer reassurance that our county's heritage will be

safeguarded by those in the Highways department who are charged with making physical changes to the historic built environment.

Kind regards,

Fiona Cairns,

Director, Suffolk Preservation Society.

