

1) Email to Suffolk Preservation Society

I recently attended your Media Training Session and after the Meeting picked up a copy of Suffolk View- Spring 2019.

In this edition on page 9 it states that "SPS remains disappointed at the scant regard given to the historic character of our towns and villages by developers and decision makers when it comes to traffic. Suffolk Highways in particular seems to pay little attention to the historic environment when installing signage and bollards.

We, at Beccles Society have had similar problems with Suffolk Highways.
In March 2019 we contacted them with the following comments:-

The traffic lights at this location incorporate .No right turn./No left turn" signs within the head of the signal fixtures, making the free standing equivalent signs superfluous and hence redundant. In the interests of protecting the Conservation Area would you please arrange for the redundant signs to be removed.

Their response was:-

We do look at removing clutter but the funding available to undertake this type of work is very limited and has to be prioritised, especially with the additional costs of disconnection of the UKPN power supply's to these illuminated signs . The signs are required to ensure the one way is clearly signed with the no entry signs no right turn /no left turn meeting the requirements to enforce the Traffic Regulation Order

One of the ways is to consider the works within a larger scheme. Presently a scheme to upgrade the Market Street/Smallgate and Newgate/Station Road Traffic Signals is being designed and this is investigating erecting regulatory ELV signs on the Traffic Signal posts and removing some of the standalone signs, again this is dependent on costs. The works are presently being programmed for early summer.

The Scheme has now been implemented with scant concern for the Conservation Area. Existing granite kerbstones have been replaced with concrete ones. Existing flagstones have been replaced with tarmac, redundant signs have been left in place. "No Entry" signs are full A- road size when a smaller size for the Conservation Area could have been used. The Public Hall on the north side of Market Street is listed and every opportunity should have been taken to enhance the setting.

We appreciate that funds are extremely limited, but the traffic/pedestrian signal scheme has resulted in a deterioration of the existing streetscape.

In view of the comments expressed in Suffolk View (Spring), I should be grateful if you would have a look at this scheme in Beccles, and if you are in agreement with our comments, take up the issue with Suffolk Highways as neither we nor our elected representatives are able to achieve anything at all on this matter.

I enclose 5 photos of this location

Photo 1 shows the change in kerbstones and the tarmac surface.

Photo 2 shows duplication of "No Left Turn" signs

Photo 3 shows duplication of "No Entry" signs

Photo 4 shows duplication of "No Right Turn" signs

Photo 5 shows correct signage

Paul Fletcher, Beccles Society











2) Response from Suffolk Preservation Society

Thank you for bringing the road traffic signage in a conservation area to our attention. This has been a long standing problem – the fact that SCC Highways Department does not inform or negotiate with a District planning office conservation contact when making changes in designated areas. This results in just the sort of case that you relate.

It is a problem SPS has been aware of and getting a good outcome has largely depended on the contact at SCC Highways Department and their willingness to adopt conservation practices and make non-standard changes. It is also one of finance too, perhaps when particular materials may be required. However, with a combined will one would have thought that a better outcome could be achieved. If we can find enough cases throughout Suffolk we could take this to them and perhaps get them to agree a procedure that informs all parties, and that the appropriate information, siting and materials are located sensitively.

I will put your information in the Heritage Section of *Suffolk View* and ask for other examples – perhaps we may have enough examples to take to SCC Highways to have a meaningful discussion, and procedure.

Thank you so much for taking the trouble to bring this to our attention.

Editor, Suffolk View, Suffolk Preservation Society.

3) Email response from East Suffolk Conservation Officer to item 1) above.

I acknowledge the issues that you are having with the County Highways as set out in the attached information with removal of duplicate signage and retention of previously installed enhanced surface materials.

The County being a large organisation with different sections carrying out different areas of work such as improvements and maintenance it is not always easy to be as co-ordinated as well as everyone may hope.

The County Council and the Districts Councils, where applicable, should be following the advice given in the adopted Suffolk Conservation Manual
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/planning-waste-and-environment/suffolks-countryside-and-wildlife/Conservation-Manual-Forward-Introduction.pdf#>

It is quite old and some references to policy may have been superseded over time but the advice on design approach and attention to detail is still valid.

It is noted that there have been issues with materials for enhancement works, such as the longevity of surface dressing - especially applied to old surfaces etc. and the use of riven slabs, which may be found to be too uneven to be suitable for highly pedestrian trafficked areas.

More generally, I have noted that the Primrose yellow paint used in Lowestoft Conservation Area this year, appears different to how it is of a more intense/vivid shade – but perhaps this may fade a bit over time.

Looking at the particular issues at Beccles

I note the County's response;

"We do look at removing clutter but the funding available to undertake this type of work is very limited and has to be prioritised, especially with the additional costs of disconnection of the UKPN power supply's to these illuminated signs . The signs are required to ensure the one way is clearly signed with the no entry signs no right turn /no left turn meeting the requirements to enforce the Traffic Regulation Order"

However, I would have thought that the removal of the separate illuminated sign and pole adjacent Odd Bins should have been part of whichever the scheme saw a new "no entry" sign added to the rear of the traffic lights and it appears that rationalisation of the signage/ equipment has not been addressed when it would appear to be the best time to do so.

Enhanced materials – In the past funds for improved materials may have been assisted by payments from the District Councils.

It seems that the recent traffic management scheme in Beccles which resulted in the loss of enhanced materials did not take into account the previous enhancement works, resulting in standard materials being used which is unfortunate as it has a more negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

It is recognised that funding for enhanced materials for schemes has diminished over the last decade and so the additional cost of the installation of non-standard materials and their ongoing maintenance has become more of an issue, as budgets generally have been tightened and grants from other bodies for such works from Historic England for this kind of work also cut.

I will also copy this e-mail to colleagues at Suffolk County Council's Highways to highlight the issues you have had, should they not already be aware, in the hope that some of the issues you have raised can be resolved and to try to prevent such problems being repeated, if they can, in the future. I am willing to comment on proposals that the Highway's may have within Conservation Areas, as and when they arise, to try to maximum positive outcomes and minimise any harm from a conservation point of view.

Regards

Elizabeth Martin | Senior Design & Conservation Officer