



University of Sheffield

A Wayfinding & Signage Strategy Summary Report

Draft 6

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PLACE
MARQUE
+

Contents

1	Background	3
2	Consultation and key findings	5
3	Strategic opportunities	10
4	Vision	15
5	Next steps	26

Background

What the project is

In October 2022, UEB agreed to the development of a Wayfinding Strategy. Placemarque, a leading wayfinding agency, was appointed to lead a university-wide consultation and outline a new strategy.

Why is the project required?

A well-designed wayfinding system can significantly improve the user experience by reducing stress, increasing efficiency, and promoting safety. The wayfinding system can positively affect reputation, especially for first-time visitors. The project aims to develop a Wayfinding Strategy for The University of Sheffield, set out the current key issues and problems and develop a strategy for a proposed solution. The document summarises the strategy, setting out the principles to inform further project phases to deliver a successful wayfinding scheme for the University of Sheffield.

What is hoped to be achieved?

Following the brand ID refresh and significant investments into the public realm, the university can maximise these investments and enhance the student, staff and visitor experience through improved wayfinding and signage.

Our findings throughout this stage of work show that the University of Sheffield's current wayfinding approach performs poorly with its audiences. The Wayfinding Strategy carried out in 2023 provides a blueprint that will need to be tested in the Design and Development stage; this will then provide the guidelines and design principles to adhere to in a phased implementation stage.

Project Overview



Background

Examples of good practice:

Lancaster University

- Signs use heads up mapping and you are here points to help users navigate the campus
- Signs have glass panels with vinyl graphics, so are easy to update
- Campus zones are easily recognisable through colour coded frames
- Key spaces and colleges are identified with space markers
- Signs align with BS8300 guidelines



Examples of good practice:

Oxford Brookes University

- Sign use same material as campus architecture
- Large signs at gateways help to create a sense of arrival
- Illumination is used in sign design
- Clear hierarchy of information on signs
- Strong brand presence in sign design through colours, fonts, icons etc
- Signs are placed in open areas to avoid blocking any key routes



Examples of bad practice:

University of Sheffield

- Signs are poorly located and sometimes hidden behind walls
- Campus map is orientated North making it difficult to read
- University brand has been applied inconsistently
- Signs don't stand out in their environment and are easily missed
- No clear idea how far away destinations are which discourages exploration
- Lack of consistency in information given across campus



Consultation and Key findings

Who did we consult with?

We have consulted with various stakeholders in the analysis stage to allow us to gather insights from individuals who have encountered wayfinding issues at the university.

We ran a series of consultation sessions to uncover navigation, connectivity, naming, and existing signage infrastructure challenges. To ensure broad participation, the consultation sessions included:

- A Drop-In Session
- Focus Group Days
- A Digital Survey

The consultation exercises were open to:

- All staff and students
- Included representation from the Student Union officers, education and Disability and Dyslexia Support Service

What are the key findings?

From our engagement sessions, we found that the current wayfinding performs poorly, giving the impression of a campus that's not well-connected and hard for people to find their way around, especially for a new or unfamiliar user.



Photos from consultation sessions

Consultation and Key findings

We have summarised the key findings into the following four problem areas:

Problem 1 - Who?

New visitors and people familiar with the campus but visiting a new area need help finding their way around.

“Sometimes I still get lost, especially when meeting in a different place.”

Problem 2 - What?

The pre-visit and on-site information needs to be more consistent; there are gaps in signage provision and discrepancies in the information displayed across various pre-visit and on-site platforms/signage.

“Consistency is absolutely essential. All systems (maps, apps, timetabling, room signs, building signs, virtual tours) need to use the same names, room numbers and systems. This is the single biggest problem at the moment - e.g. in The Wave (brand new building!) there are numerous inconsistencies - e.g. Levels are labelled A, B, C but the rooms are numbered and the timetable system uses a third set of labels”

Problem 3 - How?

There is no standard or design system that is comprehensively followed across the university.

“No consistency of signs, some are multiple styles and colours and some don't list the relevant departments”

Problem 4 - Place

There is no clear sense of ‘campus’ or entry points across campus

“As a relatively new member in the university, I feel it is quite difficult to navigate between different buildings...Wayfinding with an indication of walking times would be useful, many underestimate the walking time to reach the Management School from the centre of campus / SU for example”



Examples of mental mapping from Focus Group consultation

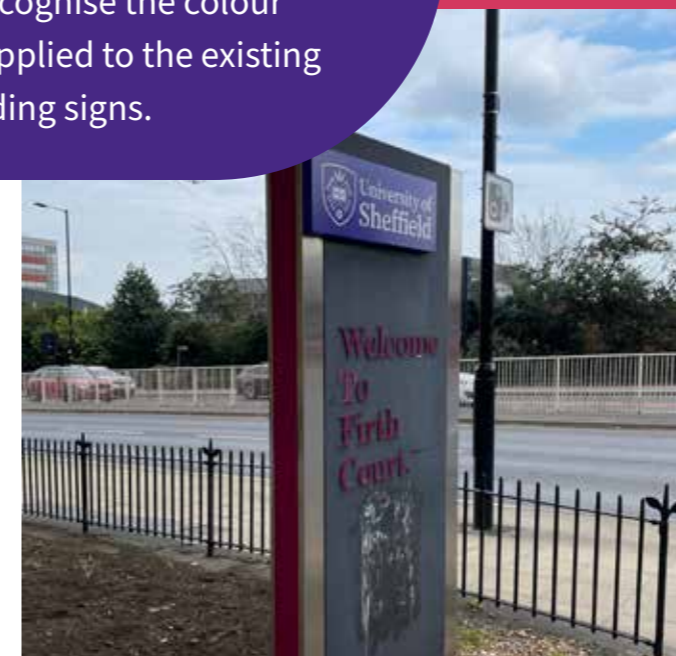
Consultation and key findings



Only

4%

of consultees recognise the colour zoning currently applied to the existing wayfinding signs.



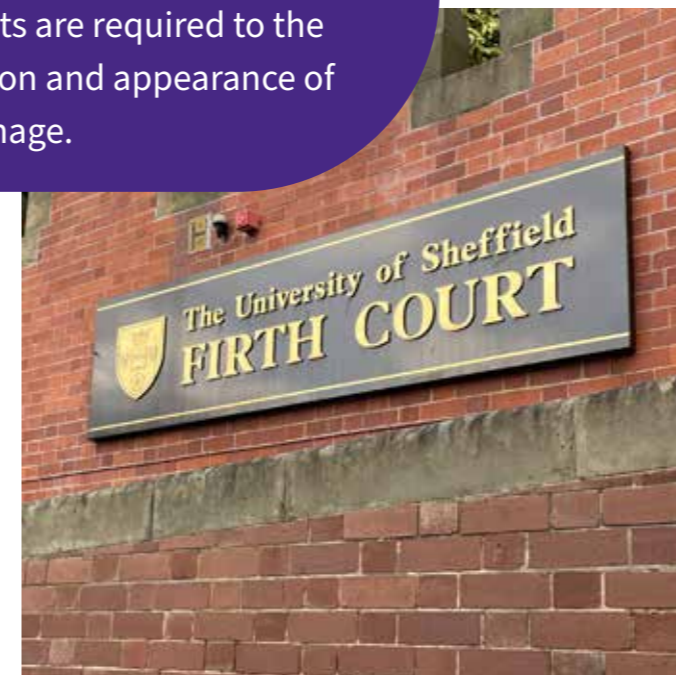
Photos from Audit

Consultation and key findings



58%

of consultees that took part in the digital survey suggested improvements are required to the consistency of information and appearance of the signage.



Photos from Audit

Consultation and key findings



68%

of the city campus was identified as an arrival point during the digital survey. The area where most people arrived was in the centre of the campus, between Hicks building and Jessop West.



Photos from Audit

Strategic opportunities

A sense of place, collaboration and community

Promote interaction, communication and cohesion throughout the estate by:



Having a consistent information structure applied to the wayfinding information.



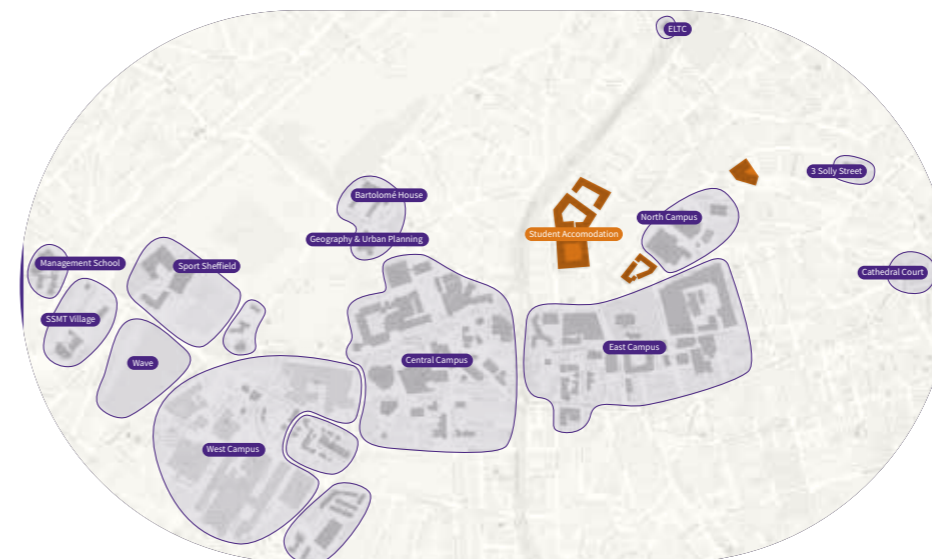
Strategic placement of signage across the estate



Identifying and naming external spaces and routes



Design of a bespoke sign family that identifies the University of Sheffield brand within the public realm



Remove existing zoning references across the wayfinding signage to remove notional borders.

Strategic opportunities

Sustainability

Designed to minimise environmental impact and to support our University of Sheffield Sustainability Strategy by:

- Encourage active travel and use of sustainable transport connectivity by standardising information across various platforms, such as trains, buses, trams, and cycling signage.
- Improve the walkability of the campus by providing precise and directional information.
- Use interchangeable components and highly durable, sustainable, recyclable and environmentally friendly materials.
- Implement a central management system for roll out and maintenance of the system.
- Ensure the sign design is easily updateable.
- Explore how physical wayfinding should work intrinsically with digital solutions such as the iSheffield App.
- Explore how digital solutions can provide real-time information and updates, negating the need for printed materials.
- Explore lighting solutions.
- Engage with key stakeholders and broader user consultation throughout the project stages to ensure project buy-in.



University College London

Strategic opportunities

Inclusiveness and Accessibility

Standardised and consistently applied design principles will support inclusivity and accessibility; this will be achieved by meeting British Standards 8300. Which defines the best practices for designing an accessible and inclusive environment, including:

- Sign function/sign types and a consistent sign family
- Location and sign positioning
- A coherent information hierarchy
- Universally recognised symbols
- Colour contrast and visibility, illumination and glare
- Layouts and sizes

Additionally the strategy suggests exploration of the following interactive solutions to achieve and improve innovative and inclusive environment:

- Multi-Sensory design elements - tactile elements/auditory guidance
- Flexibility/ personalisation - digital and RTI solutions
- Training and education - guided tours



The Oxford Brookes sign has a header panel that acts as a beacon positioned at the highest point of the sign.

Directional content follows with the map positioned at a readable eye level. The sign family consists of a cohesive sign form and the repeated structure of information and language.

Strategic opportunities

Wellbeing and Safety

Create a positive environment that improves the sense of safety and security in the external environment through:

- Coherent and consistent external wayfinding signage.
- Consistency in layout helps people predict and become familiar with the system across an expansive estate.
- Improving people's familiarity, understanding of their surroundings and confidence in navigating and moving through the campus.
- Creating a sense of place through interpretation and identity.

Internally illuminated panels provide soft lighting through Manchester Metropolitan's city centre campus.

Significant beacon identifiers create a recognisable sense of place. The design explored how to create modular seating elements to encourage people to populate outdoor spaces.



Manchester Metropolitan University

Strategic opportunities

Strong Foundations and Ambition

The wayfinding can celebrate and offer a unique connection with the University spaces by:

- Bespoke wayfinding designs that reflect the rich heritage and unique stories, which can be explored in the design development to encourage and enrich the educational environment.
- Create memorable and positive experiences for users. This could involve using innovative design, technology, and aesthetics to make the navigation process more enjoyable and engaging.

Take wayfinding to new levels through:

- Multi-Sensory features like tactile maps and audible cues.
- Explore incorporating interactive mobile apps, for example The iSheffield App can be developed to provide real-time information, immersive experiences, and personalised navigation - especially in the Education experience.
- Explore becoming a smart campus that utilises various devices, sensors, data analytics, and automation to enhance the overall experience of users.



Digital wayfinding totems linked to a central management system follow the design of the public realm. The angular buildings and landscape of the development have inspired the sign form and pattern detail. The colour and material finishes complement the site architecture and public realm material palette to create a strong place identity. Digital displays included split screens to allow wayfinding information and map design to be static while accommodating promotions of event information and real-time public transport information.

Wellington Place

Vision

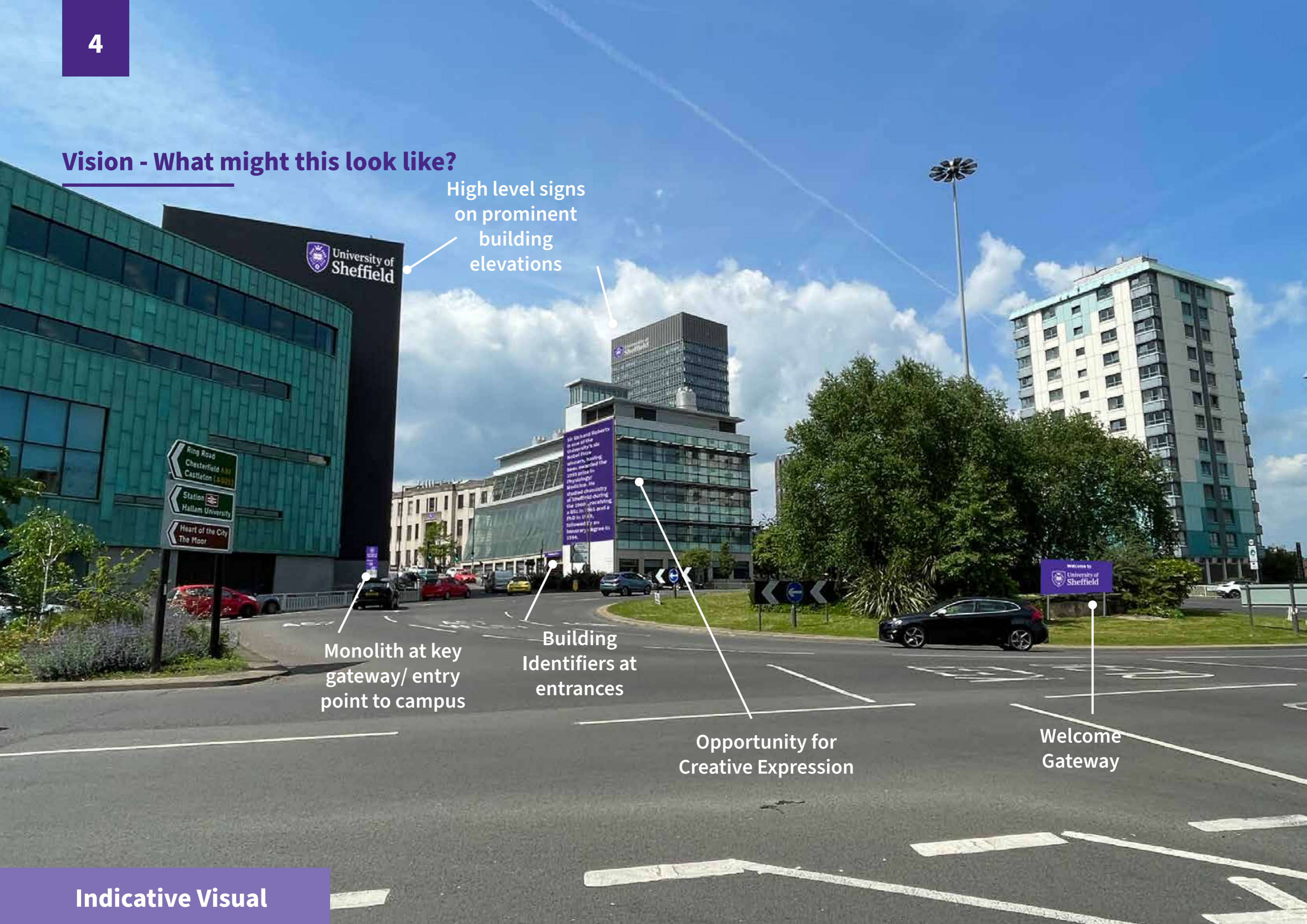
Create a campus that's **easy for visitors and people unfamiliar with the area to know that they have arrived on campus and to navigate through** - an enhanced student, staff and visitor experience.

Applying an inclusive, sustainable, standardised and connected approach to the design of Wayfinding & Signage across the campus and related mediums, promotes a greater sense of **place, ambition, community and safety.**

Vision - What might this look like?



Vision - What might this look like?



High level signs on prominent building elevations

Monolith at key gateway/ entry point to campus

Building Identifiers at entrances

Opportunity for Creative Expression

Welcome Gateway

Vision - What might this look like?



Vision - What might this look like?

NEW 'Central Teaching Lab' building

High level signs on prominent building elevations

Monolith at key gateway/ entry point to campus

Crest used as a quick easy to identify university ident

Increase university presence at tram stop



Vision

A coherent and bespoke sign family that utilises heads-up map monoliths, wall-mounted and projecting signs to aid orientation and navigation. Reinforced university branding through colour, typeface, style, naming and tone of voice of legend description.



Vision

Hierarchy of Naming

Reinforce a consistent hierarchy for wayfinding to direct users to spaces and buildings.

University > Campus > Building/ Public Space > Occupier

For example:

University of Sheffield > City Campus > Jessop Building > Department of Music

University of Sheffield > City Campus > Concourse

*Occupiers should only be signed too at building entrances and not included in external directional signage.

A naming and information strategy

University

- The University name is the primary identifier for the University and should be consistently applied to external signage. Refine the use of The University logo and The University coat of arms on external signage.

Campus

- The following terminology is used to break up the estate - City campus, AMRC, Student Residences, Northern General Hospital and Norton Playing Fields.
- Named campuses encourages a sense of belonging.

Zoning

- Zoning is not beneficial for wayfinding within the University of Sheffield.
- Remove all references to zones from the Wayfinding Strategy.

Route networks and External Public Spaces

External network of paths, routes and public spaces act as easily recognisable orientation points. These spaces should be named and identified to aid in the wayfinding journey.

Building Naming Principles

The naming of buildings should be consistent across the University estate.

Update buildings as new buildings are added or refurbished so eventually all buildings will have a building name and building address.

Occupier

Occupiers of a building should be identified at building entrances only.

Not all occupier information should be at the building entrance this information should be rationalised as part of a separate internal Wayfinding Strategy.

Wayfinding Priorities

The wayfinding priorities align with the University vision and values;

- Inclusivity
- Collaboration
- Wellbeing
- Ambition
- Sustainability

Typography

Use Source Sans Pro and Source Serif Pro

Source Sans Pro

Aa

Light

Aa

Regular

Aa

Semi Bold

Aa

Bold

Colour Palette

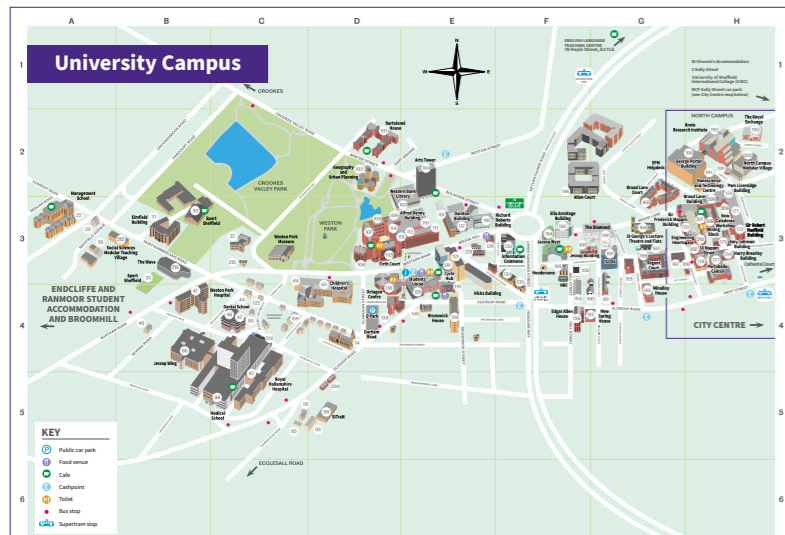
The colour chosen for wayfinding has been selected from the University's core colour palette.



Vision

Enhanced and consistent maps

Consistent and improved pedestrian mapping will be a key driver in building user legibility, enabling the user to build up a mental map of the buildings and the spaces between is one of the most effective methods of encouraging successful orientation. Users that are able to build an accurate cognitive map of their environment understand their location more readily and are less reliant on directional signage. Put simply they are less likely to get lost, and if they do they find it much easier to find their way out again. We suggest to develop a new master mapping to be used across all platforms and managed centrally. The mapping should align with new design drivers.



Printed Campus Map



Connect Sheffield Map



Example of user friendly consistent mapping.



Prospectus Map



iSheffield Map



Wayfinding Map Totems

Vision

Replacement signs and new locations

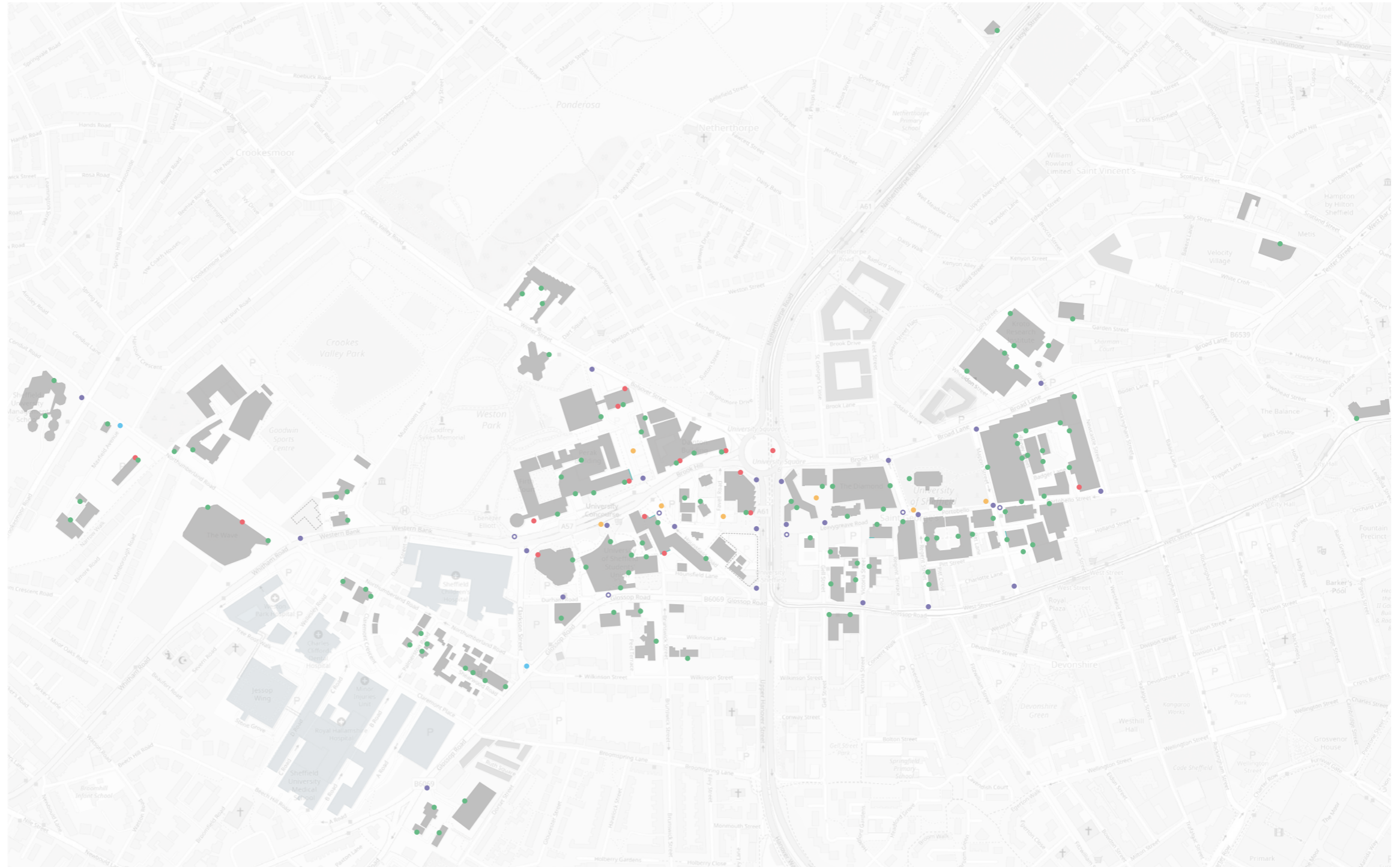
Rationalise sign functions and optimise sign locations.

Key

- Fingerpost
- Crest
- Connect Sheffield Sign Wrap
- Map Monolith
- Place Marker
- Building Sign
- Interpretation Sign

The plan here shows indicative locations for signs across the city centre campus, based on the principles set out in the strategy.

Map monoliths and directional fingerposts have been placed at key orientation and arrival points. High level signage and interpretation on building facades has been introduced to help create a sense of place.



Vision

Placement Strategy should follow:

- Primary arrival points require gateway/ welcome signs
- Map and directional monoliths are required at key orientation points and will replace fingerposts/ map panels.
- All public spaces require an area marker
- High-level signage should use the University logo with the name
- Mid-level building name signs are to be positioned above entrance doors to the buildings
- Building façades are canvas opportunities for creative expression and to build a sense of place
- Low-level building tray signs should be positioned at entrance thresholds only.
- Fingerposts will be a reinforcement of directional content, not a primary use.
- Where Connect Sheffield signs are located on UoS, a branded design should be added to these signs to identify the estate.

Legibility

Move away from the fingerpost directional system and introduce a visual map system that provides better context and visibility of the University estate. All signs should conform to meet BS8300 standards.

Accessibility

Avoid placing signs in the middle of pathways. Existing locations will be reviewed location-by-location to assess if the sign is required and if it is in its optimal positioning.

Positioning

Signs should be placed in areas with limited obstructions to sight lines.
Free-standing signs must be located in hard standing to allow for accessible access.

Signage

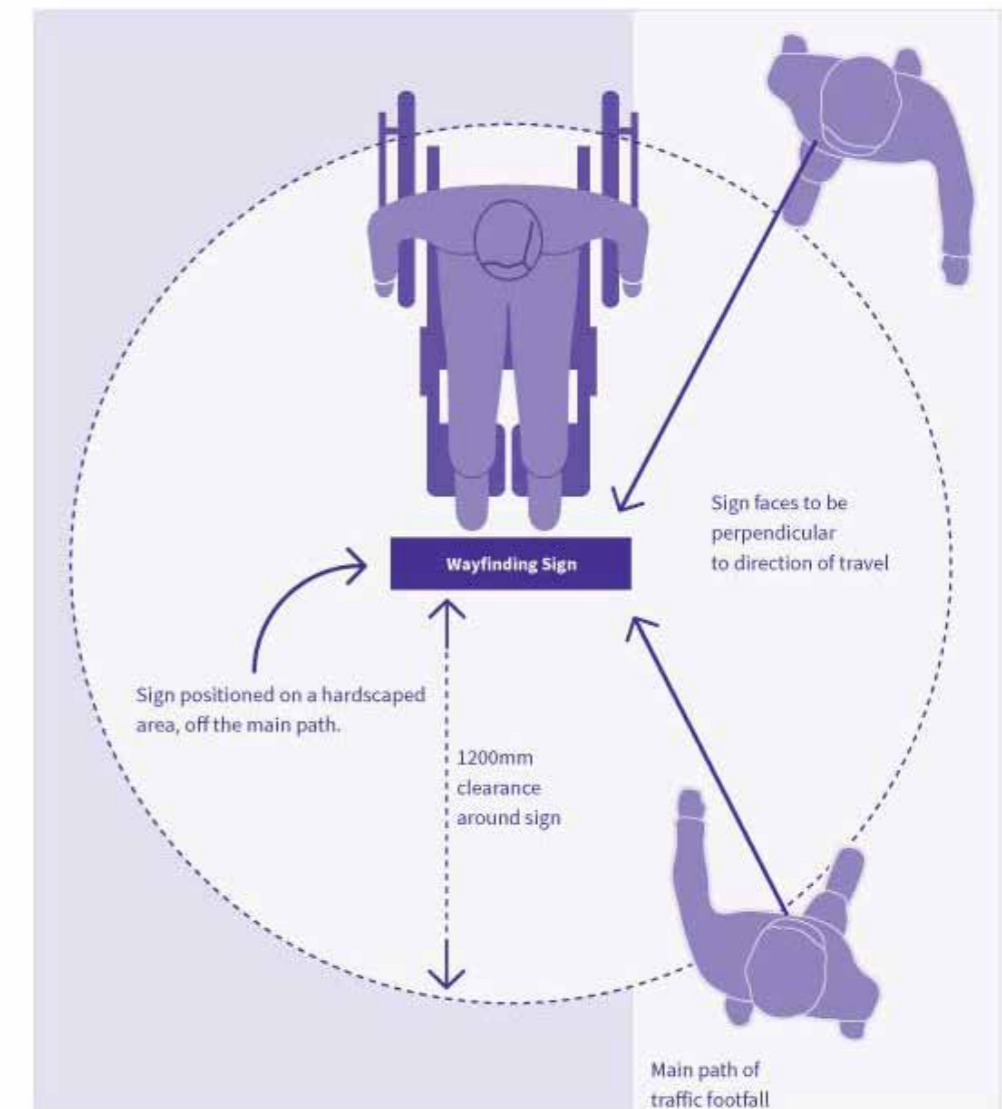
Avoid over-signing to destinations, as this will cause confusion and will overwhelm the user with the amount of information that they are getting. All out-of-date and redundant signage should be removed to ensure there is clear messaging and no conflict of information.

Lighting

Include LED lighting to improve safety and visibility across the estate.

48%

of consultees reported poor consideration for accessibility and inclusive design in the appearance of the wayfinding signage.



Optimal signage positioning

Vision

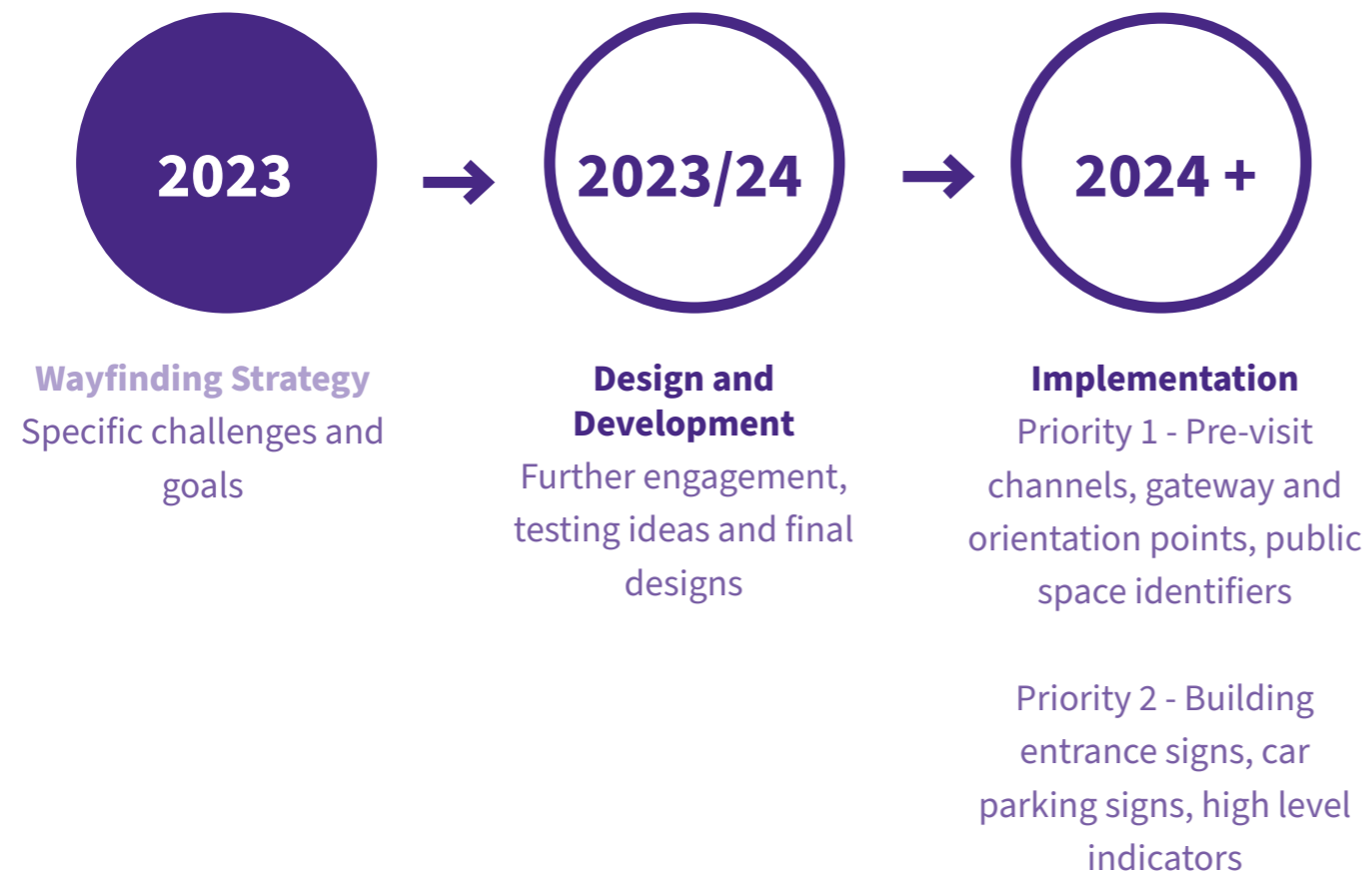
Signage toolkit

A signage toolkit should be developed for future rollout and management of the wayfinding scheme



Next Steps

Project Overview

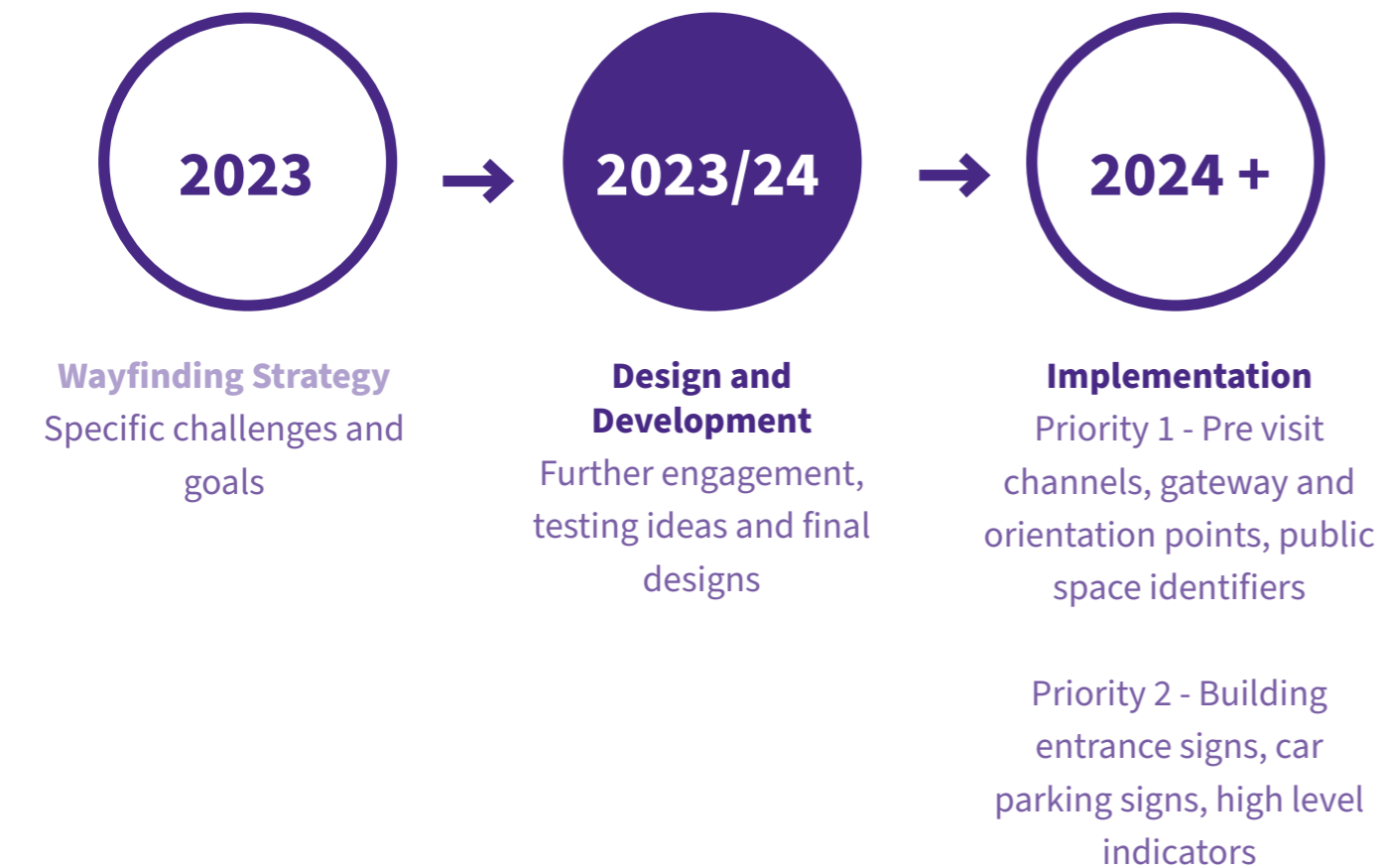


Wayfinding Strategy

The Strategy is the conclusion of Phase 1. Placemarque has outlined specific wayfinding challenges and goals to enhance wayfinding at the University of Sheffield.

Next Steps

Project Overview



Phase 2 Design and Development

The project's next stage involves further user engagement and testing the ideas set out in the strategy. Scope of works include:

- Consultation on recommendations, including designs
- Workshop to develop digital strategy
- Review of planning consideration for high level signage
- A phased plan
- Content schedule
- Finalised information strategy
- Clear and concise mapping suite
- Finalised sign family design
- Budget for implementation
- Artwork Templates for sign types
- Design intent drawings
- Sign location plan
- Sign design manual
- Training sessions / resources
- Tender process to manufacturers

Next Steps

Technology Opportunities

Technology-driven navigation solutions alone would not present a welcoming environment. It is, therefore, crucial to the success of the digital strategy that any wayfinding assets, whether digital or physical, work in conjunction with one another to provide a seamless and effective wayfinding journey.

iSheffield App:

Our initial research has shown a disconnection between the on-site signage and the digital app and an opportunity to improve this.

The promotion of the app can be integrated into the layout of the sign. This can be accessed by scanning a QR code that takes the user directly to the app store.

Additional app features that can be explored to improve personalisation and accessibility for wayfinding could include:

- Individual User Accounts
- Virtual 360 Tours
- Visual (Not 360) Tours
- Audio Tours
- Stylised Mapping
- Facilities
- Calendar / Time Based Events
- Booking System
- Transport Information (Rail/ Tram/Bus)
- Rewards

There is also further opportunity to develop an innovative tech driven wayfinding solution by exploring the following areas further in the next design development stage.

Augmented Reality:

AR can overlay digital information onto the real world through a mobile camera. This can help users identify buildings and landmarks, AR can also add interpretation and animated features to the wayfinding by describing more about the Universities rich heritage or encouraging walking tours.

Digital Screens:

Digital displays can be built into the signage structures. The screens allow for changing needs in the environment and allow for prompt changes and flexibility to content. Consideration on whether digital signs are required should be considered. These signs require regular maintenance and have running costs to consider. Digital screens are not preferable for wayfinding functionality only. We recommend that the wayfinding information is static for better user engagement.

Next Steps

Project Overview



2024 +

Implementation

Priority 1 - Pre-visit channels, gateway and orientation points, public space identifiers

Priority 2 - Building entrance signs, car parking signs, high level indicators

Phase 3 Implementation

We envisage the implementation stage split into two phases. Priority 1 - Pre-visit channels, gateway and orientation points, public space identifiers and priority 2 - Building entrance signs, car parking signs, high-level indicators. Scope of works include:

Appoint manufacturer
Agree final scope of works