

BRIEFING REPORT: VILLAGE NOTICEBOARD MAINTENANCE & REPLACEMENT OPTIONS

To: Spratton Parish Council

From: Gary Ashton

Date: September 2026 Meeting

Subject: Review, Maintenance, and Replacement Options for Village Noticeboards within the Conservation Area

1. Executive Summary

The Parish Council's aging wooden noticeboards have reached an advanced stage of deterioration requiring immediate intervention. Local maintenance contractors, R&G Grounds Maintenance, noted that the infrastructure is "quite ancient" and requires immediate wood treatment and latch repairs to continue functioning securely. Further improvements (replacing warped interior pinboards, deteriorating woodwork, and faded, opaque Perspex windows) will introduce additional costs.

Agendas and public declarations are required by law to be clearly displayed for residents. However, because these assets sit within the official boundary defined by the Spratton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2021), any replacement must legally preserve or enhance the historic core and architectural character of the village.

This updated report provides a cost-benefit analysis of short-term maintenance against long-term replacement using four distinct material options. It balances economic value against strict heritage compliance. This report recommends consolidating from a two-board model to a single, high-quality, heritage-compliant board to lower capital outlay and eliminate long-term visual clutter.

2. Current Asset Condition & Heritage Context

- **Current Assets:** The Parish Council owns a pair of matching wooden noticeboards located opposite the shop on Brixworth Road.
 - **Reported Defects:** The internal latch on one unit is loose, requiring wood filler and resealing. The external timber framing is weathered, showing advanced decay and structural rot. The Perspex windows are increasingly opaque, and the interior pinboards are warped.
 - **Conservation Constraint:** Street furniture at this high-profile location falls under the statutory protections of the West Northamptonshire Council supplementary planning document. Modern, industrial, or low-grade materials are legally restricted to prevent damage to the historic streetscape.
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3. Appraisal of Options

Option A: Status Quo – Repair & Maintenance

- **Action:** Direct R&G Grounds Maintenance to undertake remedial works, apply wood filler, reconstruct missing woodwork, and apply weatherproofing treatment across both existing units. Request quotes for replacing the opaque Perspex and warped interior pinboards.
- **Heritage Alignment:** High. Restoring existing assets preserves the authentic appearance of the streetscape without altering historical materials.
- **Financial Implications:** Potentially lower immediate cost, but introduces an ongoing recurring maintenance liability. R&G cannot provide a fixed quote, as further structural rot is highly likely to be uncovered once work begins, escalating costs.
- **Longevity:** 1–3 years maximum before structural rot demands full decommissioning.

Option B: Full Capital Replacement

Should the Council choose to replace the infrastructure, four commercial options are appraised below against the strict criteria of the 2021 Conservation Plan:

Supplier & Product Profile	Key Specifications	Unit Cost (Excl. VAT)	Heritage & Conservation Compliance	Potential Drawbacks
<u>Make Me Something Special Premium Oak Board</u>	• Solid English Oak timber • 4mm Toughened Glass • Premium magnetic steel backing case	From £1,399.00	Highest Compliance. Matches the historic village aesthetic perfectly. Deep-carved custom lettering enhances local character.	• Significant upfront budgetary impact. • Requires manual oil treatment 2–4 times annually to prevent silvering.
<u>Noticeboard Warehouse 2-Bay Composite Board</u>	• 2 Bays (8 x A4 Capacity) • Heavy-duty recycled plastic • 2500mm x 88mm robust posts	£1,195.10	Moderate Compliance. Endorsed by nearby West Haddon PC. Dark timber-like aesthetic mimics the existing units from a distance.	• High upfront capital cost. • Header text additions cost extra (£125.16). • Synthetic material close up lacks natural wood grain.
<u>The Noticeboard Company "Breeze" Board</u>	• Varied layouts (A3 to 12xA4) • Magnetic interior backer • Includes text headers & 3m matching posts	From £429.00	Low Compliance. Standard modern design. Aluminum posts and frame look out of place against historic stone backdrops.	• Only 12-month manufacturing guarantee. • Limited display space in base unit.
<u>Barriers Direct Double-Door Case</u>	• 8 or 18 x A4 Capacity • 30mm Aluminium Frame • Vandal-resistant Plexichoc glazing	£533.38 (Anodised Baseline)	Non-Compliant. Industrial aesthetic directly conflicts with conservation zone rules.	• Painted colour-matching raises cost to £680.61. • High risk of planning objections due to visual conflict.

4. Considerations for the Council

- **Rationalisation of Assets (One Board vs. Two):** The village currently spreads communication across two older boards. Official notices are now mirrored digitally on the Spratton Parish Council website and social media platforms. Consolidating into a single, high-capacity, vandal-resistant board at the current location reduces the physical footprint by half. This step directly aligns with the Conservation Plan's mandate to reduce unnecessary visual clutter in the historic core.
- **Maintenance Liabilities vs. Capital Expenditure:** Moving toward basic aluminium or plastic composites virtually eliminates upkeep costs but introduces heritage compliance risks. Investing in premium timber satisfies planning constraints but demands seasonal labour to protect the material.

5. Recommendations for Resolution

It is proposed that the Parish Council debates and resolves one of the following updated steps during the September 2026 meeting:

- Resolution A: Agree to a temporary maintenance trial with R&G Grounds Maintenance, authorizing payment for immediate latch and wood preservation work to protect the boards through the winter season while final conservation-approved replacement specifications are drawn up.
- OR
- Resolution B (Recommended): Consolidate from two noticeboards down to one single unit located opposite the shop on Brixworth Road. Allocate capital expenditure from reserves for the purchase of either the Make Me Something Special Premium Oak Board (£1,399.00 Ex. VAT) to achieve maximum heritage compliance, or the Noticeboard Warehouse Recycled Plastic Unit (£1,195.10 Ex. VAT) as a low-maintenance alternative that mimics wood. Authorize R&G Grounds Maintenance to handle installation, removal, and disposal of the old boards at the quoted cost of £131.07 + VAT.

6. Justification for Funding the Works from Reserves

Based on our Reserves Policy, utilizing reserves to fund this infrastructure project is justified under two distinct categories:

1. Earmarked Reserves ("Renewals"): The policy explicitly states that Earmarked Reserves are held for Renewals to *"enable the council to plan and finance an effective programme of equipment replacement and property maintenance."* Replacing or repairing the village noticeboards fits this description exactly.
2. General Reserves ("Unexpected Events" / "Significant Pressures"): The policy defines General Reserves as unrestricted funds used to *"smooth the impact of significant pressures"* or to be held *"in case of unexpected events"*. The advanced state of decay, structural failure, and the need to meet strict statutory conservation guidelines represent an unforeseen financial pressure that threatens the Council's legal obligation to clearly and appropriately display public notices.

For review, amendment, and formal vote at the September 2026 ordinary meeting.

IMAGES OVERLEAF

Barriers Direct



Noticeboard Company



Noticeboard Warehouse



Premium Oak



Current Noticeboards







Cottage Farm
Welford Road
Creaton
Northants
NN6 8FF

Quotation

Quotation Ref:	T11444
Date :	06-Aug-26

Enquiry From:	Name: Gary Ashton Organisation: Spratton Parish Council
Location:	Handyman Tasks
Details:	Replace Notice Boards: Remove & dispose existing boards. Erect new board.
Price:	£131.07 Plus VAT at current Standard rate Terms - 30 days from date of invoice