

**SUPPLEMENTARY  
PLANNING GUIDANCE**

**NO 7**

**OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENTS  
AND  
SIGNS**

Issued by Wolverhampton Council

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## A GUIDE FOR OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENTS AND SIGNS

### FOREWORD

This guide provides supplementary planning guidance to the Council's Unitary Development Plan for the display of outdoor advertisements and signs within the Borough.

Department of the Environment Circular 5/92 described the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 which sets out the legal requirements with respect to the display of advertisements. The current source of Ministerial advice on the subject of advertisement control is Planning Policy Guidance Note 19 issued in March 1992.

The Local Planning Authority is responsible for the control of advertisements and as such the object of this document is to set out the policies that the Borough Council will follow. The power of the planning authority to control advertisements may only be exercised in the interests of 'amenity and public safety' as specified in the Department of the Environment Circular 5/92. Certain powers are given to the planning authority to enforce the regulations.

It is clearly not practicable to prepare narrowly defined rules on advertisements because of the diversity of advertising material, their functions, and locations in which they are displayed. An over stringent, detailed design guide could lead to advertisements being stereotyped. The Council does consider it necessary, however, to provide general principles to ensure a degree of consistency in the display of advertisements. Each application for the display of advertisements will, therefore be considered on its own merits, but with regard to these principles.

When erecting new advertising it may also be necessary or desirable to install or alter the shopfront. It is therefore advised that this guidance be read in conjunction with the Council's Shopfront Design Guide which is available from:

Department of Technical Services  
2nd Floor  
Civic Centre  
St Peter's Square  
Wolverhampton WV1 1RP.

In new developments fascia and signage details should be considered at an early stage of the proposal in order that they are successfully integrated into the overall design of the development.

Anyone wishing to erect an advertisement is encouraged to consult with the Planning Division of the Technical Services Department at an early stage of a proposal to display an advertisement.

## Introduction

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 defines an advertisement as ....

"any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, awning, blind, device or representation, whether illuminated or not in the nature of, and employed wholly or partly for the purpose of, advertisement, announcement or direction... and includes any hoarding or similar structure used or designed or adapted for use,...for the display of advertisements".

Outdoor advertising holds a prominent place in our environment both as a means of informing the public and as part of the urban fabric. It makes a significant contribution to the character and quality of areas. Whilst recognising commercial requirements the influence that advertisements have on the appearance of the streetscene and individual buildings must not be ignored. Advertisements can do much to add interest and vitality but insensitive advertisements which do not relate well to the building or area in which they are displayed can do much harm to the environment.

The Council recognises that in certain areas, such as the prime shopping core in the Town Centre, pedestrian areas, multi-storey car parks and bus and railway stations, used in the right context, illuminated advertisements can add light, sparkle, colour and life to an area. A lively environment will help to attract people and investment.

In other areas for instance within Conservation areas, the Council recognises that advertising should respect and complement their character and that poor design reduces the attractiveness of these areas. Although particular restraint should apply, appropriate advertising can create an interesting and enjoyable street scene.

For ease of understanding this guide has been divided into 2 parts. Part 1 deals with general design principles, while Part 2 looks at specific policies on an area basis, such as those which apply to conservation areas, industrial areas, residential areas and road networks.

The guidance is designed to complement and supplement the policies and proposals contained in the UDP. The policies of particular relevance to the display of advertisements are contained in the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Urban Environment' section and the Wolverhampton Town Centre inset of the UDP. These policies seek to provide an indication of the general policies which the Council will seek to pursue when assessing advertisement consent applications.

Policy ENV 33 relates to restriction of advertising in certain locations throughout the borough; Policy ENV 19 relates in part to advertisements within conservation areas; and Policy TC 25 relates more specifically to the display of advertisements and signs within Wolverhampton Town Centre.

The purposes of this guide are therefore;

- \* To inform the general public and advertisers of the Council's policy on the display of advertisements.
- \* To assist the general public and advertisers to understand the role that the display of advertising can play in enhancing and improving the appearance and image of a building or area. This includes all types of advertising whether or not requiring the consent from the planning authority to display.
- \* To set out the main criteria which the Council will apply in assessing proposals for the display of advertisements.
- \* To assist the Council in negotiation or other action to achieve improvements to or removal of 'unauthorised' displays and existing 'permitted' displays.

Some advertisements do not require express consent. However, it is suggested that irrespective of the need for express consent, the policies and guidance set out in this document should be followed in the formulation of proposals.

## RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. Amenity

In assessing an advertisement's impact on 'amenity', the Council will have regard to its effect on the appearance of the building or on visual amenity in the immediate neighbourhood where it is to be displayed.

The scale of advertisements should relate not only to the building on which it is displayed but also its immediate setting in the street scene and wider townscape.

The correct siting of an advertisement will mean that it is not only visible but that it complements the townscape and building on which it is displayed.

A high standard of design is required throughout, whether it be imaginative and technically adventurous, or restrained to respect the building or area.

Signs often conflict and give rise to clutter when there is an excessive number of signs/displays on one elevation or site, often at varying heights and having varying sizes and proportions or if the design and materials do not relate to other advertising features on the elevation or site, the character of the building or the street scene.

## 2. Public Safety

In assessing an advertisement's impact on 'public safety', local planning authorities have regard to its effect upon the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transportation (including the safety of pedestrians).

Advertisements likely to cause danger to road users are;

- \* Those which obstruct or impair sightlines.
- \* Those which, by virtue of size or siting, would obstruct or confuse a road users view, or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic signal or sign, or would be likely to distract road users because of their unusual nature.
- \* Those which effectively leave insufficient clearance above any part of the highway, or insufficient lateral clearance for vehicles on the carriageway.
- \* Those illuminated signs where
  - the means of illumination is directly visible from any part of the road,
  - colour could be mistaken for, or confused with traffic lights or other signals,
  - size or brightness could result in glare and dazzle, or distract road users.
- \* Those requiring close study (eg information panels where people looking at them would be insufficiently protected from passing vehicles, or adverts on narrow footpaths causing pedestrians to step into the road).
- \* Those resembling or being confused with traffic signs.
- \* Those which incorporate moving or apparently moving elements in their display.

The Council will also take into consideration those advertisements which by virtue of their siting would be dangerous to the blind or partially sighted.

In addition to advertisement consent signs which are on or overhanging the highway may require a licence from the Highway Authority.



## SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

THE SIZE, SCALE, POSITION, DETAILING, MATERIALS AND ANY ILLUMINATION OF ANY ADVERTISEMENT SHALL BE SUCH AS NOT TO DETRACT FROM THE BUILDING, SETTING OR STREET SCENE WITH WHICH IT IS ASSOCIATED.

The Council will expect the display of advertisements to enhance the character and interest of an area and provide a positive contribution to its appearance and image.

### 1. Shopfront Advertising

Acceptable advertising on shopfronts should take the form of a sign displaying the name of the firm. Signs advertising merchandise will result in clutter and are wholly inappropriate. Shopfronts and advertising material on shopfronts can make a substantial contribution to the visual interest of an area if sympathetically handled. The following are guidelines to achieve this.

(i) Fascia Signs

Fascia signs should be in proportion to the building on which the display is proposed; and should respect and enhance any architectural features whether for a small local shop or branch of a national chain with a strong corporate image. Standardised company signs and logos may not be appropriate in all situations. Original fascias should always be retained as far as possible as they form part of the design of the shopfront.

Fascia signs of ground floor premises should not be sited or have such a depth as to extend above the bottom of any first floor window cill, or of such a length as to project beyond the width of the shop window to which it relates.

Where two shops are amalgamated the sign should not straddle two different buildings but should be designed to complement each other and the buildings on which they are displayed. Where there are separate commercial uses on upper floors, the form and siting of advertisements should not detract from or obscure the features of the building.

On Listed Buildings and within Conservation Areas there is a general presumption in favour of sign written fascia boards or individually applied letters. Glossy or reflective plastic fascias are not normally acceptable.

(ii) Window Signs

An attractive shopping area is rarely enhanced by an extensive display of acrylic or plastic window stickers by some businesses. Window signs, painted or etched on the glass, however, can provide an attractive and interesting means of alternative or additional signage if they are sensitively designed and executed.

(iii) Projecting Signs

A projecting sign should only be displayed where it would not detract from or obscure other advertising matter, detract from the appearance of the building on which it is to be displayed, or obscure architectural detail.

Normally, where appropriate there should only be one projecting sign per building except;

- Where the building has more than one elevation and a sign for each elevation may be appropriate.
- Where there is an excessive length of frontage and a need to indicate that the unit is in single use. In such circumstances the location of the sign at a corner or to indicate the presence of an entrance would be most appropriate and effective.

The height from the bottom of the projecting sign or blind to the pavement should not normally be less than 3 metres and should not project to a point within 0.45 metres of the edge of the kerb.

Some projecting signs also require a licence from the Highway Authority (the Council) where they overhang the public highway.

(a) Projecting Box Signs

Projecting box signs will generally be restricted but where acceptable they should normally be sited at fascia level and not extend more than the height of the fascia.

Projecting box signs will not normally be granted consent in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings.

(b) Projecting Hanging Signs

Top hung signs of a vertical orientation are preferred to fix projecting signs, and will normally be specified on Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas.

Hanging signs at fascia level should normally be placed at the end of the fascia sign or on a party wall location. Those which relate to the ground floor but are displayed at first floor level will normally be acceptable as long as no other projecting sign exists on the same elevation to the building.

The style of the sign and bracket should be appropriate to the building and should preferably be painted timber or metal.

(iv) Canopies

Most canopies require planning permission (and Listed Building consent if located on a Listed Building) and require a licence from the Highway Authority where they overhang the public footpath or road. Any advertisement on canopies should be consistent with the design and scale of both the canopy and shopfront.

Plastic hood type canopies are unattractive and should be avoided. Retractable awning type canopies incorporated within the shopfront design are preferable and will be required in Conservation Areas.

Canopies should preferably be recessed within door and window openings in order to prevent the obscuring of architectural detail and help reduce the impact.

Canopies should not be erected above first floor cill level. The material type and colour proposed should relate to the building and locality. Brightly coloured plastic fixed blinds are not generally acceptable.

(v) Signs Above Fascia Level

The display of advertising above the fascia (ground floor) level will be considered if it relates to the use of the building and takes account of or enhances the architectural features of the building. Areas of blank elevation, for example, may benefit from such advertisements. It may also be appropriate for purpose built offices, retail units, industrial or entertainment uses to display such advertisements. Commercial display panels which are unrelated to the use of the building will not generally be acceptable.

(vi) Name Plates

At ground floor level, name plates can be effectively applied discreetly to the wall adjacent to the entrance door. Etched brass or bronze plates are a good example.

2. Flag Advertisements

Certain single vehicle flagstaff advertisements, including national flag displays, enjoy deemed consent and it is normally multiple flagpoles that require express consent. Their acceptability is dependent on the number proposed compared to the size of the display area; the height and the location, whether commercial or residential areas. Flagstaffs on listed buildings require consent, and are generally unacceptable.

3. Posters/Hoardings

The visual impact of an advertisement, hoarding is considerable and as such they are only acceptable in limited locations under strict criteria.

It is an objective of the Council to enhance the environment of the Ring Road and other main roads and of railway and canal routes through the Borough. Advertisements other than those attached to and related to business premises generally detract from the environment and do not contribute to a high quality image of the Borough.

Freestanding advertisements located within shopping centres, commercial or industrial areas may in certain limited areas be acceptable where they screen unsightly views or building work or add interest to drab areas that are unlikely to be redeveloped in the foreseeable future, providing they are

located in conjunction with landscaping. Freestanding advertisements are considered generally to be detrimental to the environment of housing.

Advertisements that could distract road users or those in control of other forms of transport can increase the risk of accidents and are therefore not acceptable. This particularly applies to large hoardings and illuminated advertisements near junctions and signals of any kind.

The indiscriminate sticking of posters on buildings and structures is known as flyposting. Unauthorised flyposting has posed amenity problems for a number of years and the Council has resolved to take action to remove it. Flyposting is illegal and it is open to the planning authority to bring a prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

#### 4. Forecourt Advertising

Some signs displayed on forecourts advertising the nature of the business and goods sold, require consent from the planning authority. Very often these signs are haphazard, cluttered and unattractive.

Petrol filling stations, car repair centres and Do-it-Yourself stores very often display advertisements on large pillars on their forecourts. These should take the form of preferably one structure/pillar which should be carefully designed, having regard to scale, safe location, and intensity of illumination. Canopy signs should also be in proportion to the structure on which they are displayed and be well designed.

Many businesses try to increase their advertising by displaying 'A' boards and other movable advertisement displays in front of their premises. These displays often form an obstruction on the highway and are dangerous to the pedestrian. The highway and Police authorities can enforce against these advertisements under highway legislation.

5. Street Furniture

Advertising on street furniture will not be permitted unless the furniture is specifically designed to accommodate advertising material and does not detract from the amenity of the area or the quality of the furniture itself.



## ILLUMINATION OF ADVERTISEMENTS

The highlighting of buildings and pedestrian spaces is the key to a lively and safe night time environment. Shop signs do not need special illumination if the level of streetlighting and the light from shop windows is adequate for trade.

Illumination of signs can however sometimes contribute to the street scene where the illumination is treated as an integrated part of the overall design and not merely a means of drawing attention to an advertisement.

The illumination of advertisements can be a visually dominant feature which can substantially change the character of buildings and areas, and may adversely affect public safety and amenity. Therefore the visual impact of the light source and fittings requires consideration. If used in the right context however, lighting can improve the attractiveness of an area particularly at night.

Intermittent (flashing) advertisements are particularly intrusive and are not considered appropriate throughout the Borough.

Illumination, particularly from back panels, increases the impact of a sign. Where illumination is accepted, individually illuminated letters or external illumination are generally preferred.

Advice relating to the acceptable luminosity of signage where appropriate, can be obtained from the Council's Planning Office.

Acceptable types of illumination of advertisements can take different forms.

### (a) Internal Illumination

Halo lighting of a sign is one means of internal illumination that may be acceptable in certain cases.

The light source is concealed behind the lettering which stands proud of the fascia, and light is shone back to the fascia created a glow or 'halo' around the letters.

In some circumstances the complete letters may be illuminated internally, with the rest of the fascia remaining unlit. Wholly illuminated, internally lit fascia and projecting box signs are generally unacceptable.

(b) External Illumination

External illumination can be a very effective way of lighting advertisements and, where it is considered that illumination (and related fittings) is acceptable, is the preferred means of illumination in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings. It can take many forms.

Trough lighting may be effective on larger signs and involves lighting the sign from either above or below by means of a fluorescent light concealed within a trough casing. This trough should not be a prominent feature, it should blend into any architectural features and be carefully designed. One example is to mount it immediately below the cornice above the sign and colour coat it to match the fascia or building.

It may be more appropriate to illuminate smaller signs by individual spot lighting although the number and location of these lights should be carefully controlled. Swan neck lights, particularly in concentrations are particularly cumbersome and will be strongly resisted.

## SECTION 2: AREA BASED POLICIES

Not all types of advertisements are suitable in all locations. Within conservation and predominantly residential areas for example, more restrained methods of advertising are preferred, on the other hand certain parts of the borough by virtue of location and function, are considered suitable for concentrated and bright outdoor advertising and/or the application of suitable external illumination of buildings.

In all areas proposals will be subject to detailed design considerations and should conform with the Council's general guidelines in Section 1.

### Town and District Centre Shopping Streets

Many high streets often contain the larger multiple stores, this leads to a pressure for corporate images to be displayed in their signage. Often this corporatism of advertisements goes against the style of the building and area within which it is displayed, leading to an erosion of local characteristics and identities. A flexible approach to a corporate image will be expected from advertisers.

### Shopping Malls and Arcades

Advertisements within shopping centres must be considered in terms of their suitability to the pedestrian scale.

Projecting signs can create additional interest although continuity of such signs within the centre as a whole will be taken into account.

Where a fascia canopy exists, projecting signs can be top hung onto it, immediately adjacent to the fascia.

Small traditional shopping arcades have a unique appeal and attraction and create an intimate atmosphere. The design of signs should therefore respect the small scale of architecture to be found in the arcades.

Fascia size and lettering should recognise the narrow scale of the arcades. Harsh or fluorescent colours and illumination may be inappropriate.

Projecting signs should be limited to fascia or just above fascia height, one per shop unit. Simple hanging signs are preferred.

Well-executed painted lettering, of appropriate size and design, applied directly to windows will generally be acceptable as a pedestrian level advertisement.

Consideration will be given to provision of signs announcing the name of the arcade along with names of businesses displayed on one board at its entrance.

### Retail Warehouses

Purpose built retail warehouses should be designed in such a way as to limit the quantity and size of advertisements required.

Where a number of warehouses are located together a single advertising board may be appropriate at the entrance to the park identifying the businesses. A clutter of individual freestanding signs are unlikely to be acceptable.

### Car Parks

Some car parks are dark and uninviting both during the day and evening, and large inappropriate advertisements may exacerbate a hostile environment. Individual single freestanding signs will in general not be appropriate. Pedestrian scale wall mounted signs displaying directions or information are more appropriate.

### Bus/Coach/Railway Stations

A controlled scheme of illuminated advertisements at a pedestrian scale could do much to brighten up these areas for waiting travellers. These entrances should be places which announce the beginning of an inviting and interesting area.

### The 'Cultural Quarter'

The Cultural Quarter covers Lichfield Street, Queen Square, Princess Street, Berry Street, Stafford Street and Broad Street. This is an area of concentrated evening and night time activities and suitable, carefully designed illuminated displays relating to these uses will be encouraged. Regard however, must be given to the sensitive location within the Town Centre Conservation Area.

### Industrial Areas

There is potentially scope for a greater freedom for the display of signs, within industrial areas, by virtue of the uses and scale of buildings involved, although the size and location of proposed displays should always have regard to the appearance and character of the buildings on which they are displayed, and the surrounding areas. On the edges of these areas for example, where visible from residential areas or main roads, greater restraint will apply.

## Residential Areas

As a general rule no advertisement will be permitted in predominantly residential areas except where there are isolated shops, public houses and similar buildings. In these cases, size, location and any illumination of signs should not adversely affect residential amenity.

## Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

Generally within a Conservation Area or on a Listed Building, the only appropriate advertisement display is that which relates to the use of the building.

Shopfront advertising should be designed in harmony with the building and its surroundings and should be designed to become an integral element reflecting the scale, proportions and colour of the building. In certain cases the Council will encourage the restoration of older shopfronts and improvements to unsympathetic advertising.

Scale, variety and the use of traditional and natural materials are the key to the attraction of a conservation area. These elements should be recognised in shopfront advertising. Modern materials may be appropriate in some cases providing they reflect the vernacular and are appropriate to the situation. Modern shopfront advertising will generally be acceptable in more recent buildings, provided materials, colour and designs relate to the area.

Simplicity of type face and choice of clear well proportioned letter faces will always be preferred. Complicated type faces and identification logos should be avoided since they date rapidly and rarely complement the character of historic areas.

Fascias and projecting signs that are sign written or contain appropriate individually applied letters are preferred.

The use of internally illuminated box fascias and fixed projecting box signs will be discouraged. External reflective lighting from concealed lights or spotlighting should be applied if necessary. The source of light, in all cases, should be designed and fitted in such a way as not to be obtrusive or obscure any details or features of the buildings. Individually internally illuminated letters will be considered in certain circumstances, but will be carefully considered in relation to their type of illumination, method of construction, materials, and projection.

Where projecting signs are proposed, traditional hanging signs will generally be required. The most appropriate material for the sign is timber. The hanging brackets should preferably be wrought iron.

Within Conservation areas the Council will exercise strict control over the display of advertisements and discontinuance action will be taken to remove posters and other material considered to be detrimental to the appearance of buildings and the overall amenity of the area. The Council will oppose the display of advertisements which are of inappropriate scale or materials which lead to clutter or obstruct or detract from the architectural features of the building on which they are proposed to be displayed. (Policy ENV 19).