

Annex A: Guidance for Outdoor Advertisements

1. The main purpose of this annex is to set out the Department's detailed guidance to provide a consistent basis against which to consider the display of different categories of advertisements. In drawing up the guidance it is acknowledged that amenity and public safety are the only criteria that can be taken into account in assessing proposals for advertisements.
2. The guidance is not intended to be overly prescriptive, but is intended to advise applicants and commercial companies involved in promoting outdoor advertising how such advertising, if appropriately designed and sited, can contribute towards a quality environment.

Poster Panel Displays

3. Poster panel displays do not generally relate directly to the land or premises on which they are located. They comprise the more traditional paper posters on panels or hoardings, either freestanding or attached to buildings, modern displays, including moving prismatic panels, and internally illuminated PVC faced panels.
4. Poster panel displays are a common feature of urban advertising and rely on size and siting for their impact. As a result they have the potential to be over dominant and obtrusive in the street scene. There is a need therefore to ensure that such displays respect the scale of their surroundings. Equally there is a need to prevent clutter and the undue dominance of such advertisements over other uses of land.

The Countryside

5. Poster panel displays are out of place in the countryside and will generally be unacceptable. An exception may be made where the display advertises a particular event, such as a local agricultural show or fair, and is restricted to a specified time period.

Villages and Small Settlements

6. Large scale poster panel displays are generally out of place in villages and small settlements because of their potential to detrimentally impact on the visual amenity of these locations. Smaller poster panels may be acceptable depending on their size and on the scale and character of the village. The position and siting of such signage should respect the size, scale and character of surrounding buildings and features.

Residential Areas

7. Poster panel displays are out of place in any predominantly residential locality. The priority in residential areas is to maintain local character and environmental quality and to protect the amenity of residents. The size, scale and intrusive nature of poster panel displays therefore make them generally unacceptable. An exception may be made for the display of a poster panel on bus shelters in residential areas where there will be no significant impact on the amenity of adjacent residents.

Predominantly Commercial Areas

8. In commercial areas the scale of buildings may be sufficiently large to accommodate poster panel displays without adverse effect on visual amenity. The scale of commercial and industrial surroundings in our cities and towns can however vary greatly, often within short distances. It will be expected therefore that the scale of advertisement displays should respect the scale of adjacent buildings and the wider area.
9. Where an area is in mixed use, with shops and offices interspersed with residential properties, poster panel displays may on occasion be acceptable. They should be carefully related to the size and scale of surrounding buildings and designed in a manner that will not damage visual amenity or prejudice public safety.

Freestanding Advertisement Displays

10. Large freestanding panels (generally 48 sheet displays or greater) are commonly used to screen derelict and untidy land. These sites can be a potential eyesore and in many cases a carefully designed scheme for screening that integrates advertisement panels can often prevent fly tipping, vandalism and help ensure security. Such schemes need to be well maintained and will generally only be acceptable on a temporary basis.

11. Freestanding displays are also often found at airports, ports and other gateway locations where they generally provide information on the locality, local events and services.

Design Guidelines:

- the number, scale, proportions and design of freestanding advertisement panels should respect the site and its surrounding area. In particular where these are situated at the back edge of the pavement, or in other prominent locations, care will be needed to ensure that their effect on pedestrians is not overwhelming;
- panel displays should be integrated into a well designed scheme of good quality screening which allows for visual breaks between each panel. Areas to the sides of and around the hoardings should be considered with as much care as the display itself;
- wherever possible, good quality hard and soft landscaping should form part of the proposal and should be of sufficient scale to assist integration of the panel by reducing the visual impact of the overall display; and
- where the rear of the advertising panel is visible from surrounding roads or properties it should be appropriately treated.

Gable Mounted Advertisement Displays

12. Large scale poster panels (generally 48 sheet displays) located on gables are a common feature in the predominantly commercial parts of our towns and cities and may offer benefits, such as screening an untidy gable. Care however needs to be taken with such proposals to ensure they are not over dominant, and relate well to the building on which they are proposed to be positioned.

Design Guidelines:

- **the form, design, size, proportions and siting of a wall mounted poster panel should be sympathetic to the building to which it is to be attached;**
- **the panel should generally be above ground floor level on the gable and be symmetrical with the wall on which it is to be positioned;**
- **interesting features, for example architectural details, should not be obscured or destroyed; and**
- **windows should not be covered and the normal functioning of the building should not be adversely affected.**

13. Tiers of advertisement poster panels affecting the gable or flank wall of a building should be avoided as they can have a significant detrimental impact over long distance views, whilst more local views can appear cluttered.
14. The guidance above also applies to large electronic screen displays and to freestanding panels in front of a gable or flank wall of a building.

Shroud Advertisement Displays

15. Shroud advertisement displays are a relatively new form of advertising. They are known by a variety of names such as meshes, wraparounds or blow-up signs. They range in size, but are generally large-scale and can cover the whole of an elevation of a building. They can even be used to present an image of what a building will look like when alterations, renovations or building works have been completed.
16. In view of their scale and size, shroud advertisements have the potential to seriously conflict with the visual amenity of the buildings upon which the display is situated and the area in which buildings are sited. Accordingly, proposals for this type of advertisement are only likely to be acceptable in commercial areas, where they are to be attached to scaffolding surrounding a building or development site and where a contract has been drawn up for the building or renovation works.

17. To prevent clutter, account will be taken of the number of similar proposals located within the vicinity of the site and others that have the benefit of advertisement consent.

Signs on Commercial Premises

18. Signs and advertisements on commercial premises are important in announcing the presence of a business in the street and in directing customers to that location, and can assist the vibrancy of our city and town centres and other commercial areas. When sympathetically sited and designed they can contribute positively to the distinctive visual amenity of an area by giving a sense of quality and permanence.
19. The most common signs on commercial premises are fascia signs and projecting signs, either box or hanging. Their design should always complement the design of the shopfront and building and respect the wider locality. An excessive number of signs or those which are too large can dramatically affect the premises on which they are sited and have an adverse impact on the general character of the area.

Fascia Signs

Design Guidelines:

- fascia signs should be of an appropriate size, and sited and designed to harmonise with the shop front, the façade of the building and any detailing thereon;
- where there is an original fascia, the sign should make use of this with generally no advertising at sub-fascia level or on pilasters or columns;
- where a new commercial building is proposed, the location of fascia signage should be integrated into the overall design.
- on older and more traditionally styled buildings, painted signs or non-illuminated letters are preferable to panels or other types of display;
- internal illumination should preferably be in the form of individually backlit letters; and
- where external illumination is proposed, trough lighting is preferred. The trough should extend over the whole fascia and be painted to integrate it into the whole display.

Projecting Signs

Design Guidelines:

- **projecting signs should be sympathetic to the design of the building where they are to be displayed and respect fascia signage;**
- **box signs should be located at fascia level and are generally best situated at the end of the fascia;**
- **hanging signs may be acceptable at first floor level and are generally best situated in a central position between windows;**
- **to reduce visual clutter a projecting sign will generally only be acceptable where there is no other projecting advertisement such as a canopy, awning, flag or horizontal banner;**
- **internal illumination should preferably be in the form of individually backlit letters;**
- **where external illumination is proposed trough lighting is preferred with the trough painted out;**
- **projecting signs should generally project no more than 1 metre including fixings, with a maximum end width of no more than 0.1m in the case of a box sign;**
- **projecting signs should be a minimum of 2.25m above ground level in the interests of public safety; and**
- **illuminated projecting signs are generally unacceptable immediately adjacent to a neighbouring residential property.**

Blinds and Awnings

20. Originally the function of blinds was to protect perishable goods from deterioration due to strong sunlight. Today however blinds, awnings and canopies are increasingly used as a means to provide additional advertising.
21. Blinds that are well designed can improve the attractiveness of a building or street. Poorly designed or prominently located blinds or canopies displaying advertising can however detract from the appearance of

buildings, the surrounding neighbourhood, and can result in clutter. They are particularly obtrusive when located above windows on upper floors and should be avoided.

Design Guidelines:

- blinds and awnings should be retractable, made from non-reflective material and be designed to integrate with the appearance and construction of the shopfront as a whole; and
- such blinds should be a minimum of 2.25m above ground level in the interests of public safety.

Advertisements on Upper Floors

22. Where commercial premises occupy the upper floors of buildings the need to advertise their whereabouts can be important to their viability. Great care needs to be taken in considering how this can be achieved without the exterior of the building appearing cluttered.
23. Fascia signs, panel style signs, canopies, flags and banners are generally out of place on upper floors.

Design Guidelines:

- advertising on upper floors should be printed or etched onto the glass or on to internal window blinds. As an alternative, individual letters rather than an advertisement panel may be suspended behind the glass.

24. These guidelines also apply to commercial premises on ground floors wishing to advertise on upper floors.

High Level Signs

25. High level signs generally relate to those vertical or horizontal signs on the walls of tall, single use buildings such as hotels. If not treated with great sensitivity they have the potential to give the appearance of clutter within the local street scene and be obtrusive and dominant over long distances particularly when located on roofs.

Design Guidelines:

- **high level signs will generally only be appropriate where they relate to the scale and primary use of the host building;**
- **they should be designed to be read as part of the building and should not detract from any architectural feature;**
- **they should not project above the eaves or parapet of the host building; and**
- **they should have only the lettering illuminated.**

Offices in Former Residential Properties

26. In predominantly residential areas, where offices occupy part or all of a former residential property, it is essential that advertising remains unobtrusive in order that the residential amenity of the area is not prejudiced. Even in situations where offices occupy a row of former residential properties it will generally still be important to retain the overall residential appearance of the area. A more flexible approach will however be considered in those areas where, through ongoing change, surroundings have become mainly commercial.

Design Guidelines

- **the advertisement of offices in former residential properties should be by means of nameplates made of metal or other suitable materials and should be fixed to the doorway pilaster, or if there is no pilaster, they may be fixed to the masonry beside the front door; and**
- **painted or etched lettering on a front window will also generally be acceptable.**

Signs at Retail and Business Parks

27. In retail parks and business parks the uncoordinated display of advance advertisements or ad hoc directional signs to individual businesses, which bears no direct relationship to the building, land or structure upon which it is displayed is often confusing, untidy and detrimental to the appearance of an area.

28. There is great potential for all advertising associated with retail or business parks to be undertaken in a planned and co-ordinated manner. Ideally the fascia signs for individual premises should form an integral part of the building, while a single carefully designed directory board located at the entrance to the park or in other acceptable locations can avoid a proliferation of advance signs.

Design Guidelines:

- **all new buildings in a retail or business park should incorporate a signing zone as part of the design;**
- **fascia and projecting signs should be in scale with the host building and surrounding buildings and be consistent across the whole unit; and**
- **advance signage should be provided in the form of a combined directory board within a proposed or existing landscaped area designed and integrated as one scheme.**

Signs at Filling Stations and on Forecourts

29. Signage at filling stations usually comprises a combination of a canopy, a pole/pylon, and shop fascia signage together with a number of smaller forecourt signs. In view of the range of signs involved there is often potential for their cumulative effect to result in clutter. To help prevent this a co-ordinated approach should be taken when bringing forward proposals, particularly where existing signage is being replaced.
30. Particular care is needed in assessing proposals for illuminated advertisements at filling stations located adjacent to or near residential properties.

Design Guidelines:

- **all signs should be in scale with their surroundings and not detract from the amenity of the surrounding area;**
- **illumination should generally be restricted to the sign lettering and logo; and**
- **freestanding signs should be located so as not to interfere with or obstruct sightlines.**

Pylon and Pole Mounted Signs

31. Pylon and pole mounted signs are a common feature at petrol filling stations. Increasingly they are found in association with drive-through restaurants, supermarkets, retail warehousing, retail parks and car showrooms.
32. The height, size and levels of illumination of these signs may result in visual intrusion within the locality where they are situated. They can be extremely dominant over long distances and detract not only from the character and appearance of the area in which they are sited but also that of the area from which they are viewed. In addition where they are proposed close to residential properties they can be detrimental to amenities enjoyed by local residents.

Design Guidelines:

- **pylon and pole mounted signs should be in scale with their surroundings and they should not significantly exceed surrounding building heights;**
- **they should not detract from the visual amenity or character of the surrounding area;**
- **they should not be sited adjacent to, and wherever possible should not directly face residential properties; and**
- **illumination should generally be restricted to the sign lettering and logo.**