

Worcestershire County Council - Business Signage Guidance

1. Introduction

This policy forms part of the Worcestershire Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and sets out Worcestershire County Council's approach to the provision of commercially focussed signage on the highway.

2. Background

There are over 23,000 businesses in the County. Signing all of these businesses would be not be appropriate and would significantly add to street clutter, with associated safety and physical access issues. Additionally, current guidance suggests that street clutter (caused by excessive and inappropriate signage and infrastructure) is to be avoided at all costs.

The legislation set out in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (2016) determines the type of signage that the Authority is permitted to erect on the highway to both minimise clutter and ensure highway signage is prominent. It is expected that businesses will provide adequate directions to visitors through communications, marketing and advertisement. Additionally, with the growth of SATNAV directional devices, the requirement for business direction signage has significantly diminished. Nonetheless, Worcestershire County Council wishes to support local businesses wherever opportunities arise, recognising the County's priority to be "Open for Business".

3. Approach

Through a relaxed and creative interpretation of the signage regulations, several ways of permitting business signage have been developed as indicated below. A balance has been pursued that manages sign distraction and clutter, whilst allowing business signage which benefits the maximum number of businesses and visitors, supporting the local economy. To this end, permanent signage can now be considered for businesses attracting large non-regular visitor numbers (10,000+) or where numerous smaller businesses are co-located. Individually located businesses can pursue temporary signage for certain purposes. Currently, all such signage is deemed surplus to legal or traffic management requirements and so needs to be funded by the businesses concerned.

4. Permanent Signage

The various criteria and options for permanent business signage are set out below.

Tourism signage

A policy for businesses that support tourism to erect signage has been developed and can be found on the ["Apply" website page](#).

Sports Facilities

Leisure Centre signage can be pursued where at least 20 different sports facilities are provided from the closest classified road.

Large Retail Facilities

Where large retail facilities over 5000 square metres attract significant numbers of vehicles (normally identified through the provision of a 250 or greater space car park, signs indicating "Superstore" can be considered from the closest A or B road.

Garden Centres

Where garden centres exist independently, or are located with other individual retail premises that do not meet any of the associated signing policies, consideration for direction signs will be given off the nearest classified road. These facilities will need to provide adequate on-site parking provision (including provision for the disabled and coaches), toilets, Restaurant/café facilities etc.

Business Parks

Where several (6 or more) businesses are located together on a business park that attracts non local traffic, signs can be considered to this business park from the closest A or B road.

Rural Businesses

Where several (6 or more) businesses are located together in a rural area, such as at a craft centre, signs can be considered to this centre from the closest A or B road provided sufficient parking is available on site to accommodate visitors (to be agreed with Worcestershire County Council).

Industrial Parks

Where numerous (6 or more) businesses that operate large vehicles are located together on an estate and instances of vehicles getting lost and damaging unsuitable routes (for example) exist, signage can be provided to aid these delivery and collection operations.

Rural Shops and Facilities

Where a new road bypasses a village with retail businesses, bypassed community signage can be provided informing of these local facilities.

Urban Shops and Facilities

There is no legal signage available for small local shopping parades in urban areas, due to the frequency of such locations and facilities. Therefore, signage to such locations will not be pursued in order to maintain the delicate balance of shoppers to these small businesses, and to avoid unfairly disadvantaging unsigned locations.

Top 70 County Businesses

Where a long standing (5 years+) top County business (as recorded on County business records) attracts large numbers of non-regular visitors, individual signage may be considered to provide adequate direction guidance from the closest A or B road. This will only be considered if existing signage, as detailed above, is not in place, directing visitors to areas of retail or commercial industry.

5. Temporary Signage

The following sections set out Worcestershire County Council's approach to temporary signage:

Advertising Boards on the Highway

Policy in this area is defined in the Worcestershire LTP3 Walking and Public Realm Policy W15 - Trading Outdoor Seating and Advertising Boards on the Highway: "Worcestershire County Council will work with the district licensing authorities to ensure that market stalls and shops displaying stock on the footway are suitably permitted in locations which neither hinder pedestrian movement nor cause unreasonable nuisance to other highway users or frontagers and continue to be regulated and enforced.

Advertising boards placed on the highway, including footways, without permission are illegal and Worcestershire County Council will use its powers to remove and dispose of them.

Applications for outdoor seating at cafes, pubs and restaurants will be permitted where the county council is satisfied that:

The footway width is sufficient to accommodate both the seating area and the main lines of pedestrian movement; and the users of the seating area will not cause unreasonable nuisance to nearby frontagers and other highway users."

As such, the council will tolerate the provision of A-Boards as long as there are no complaints and the individual board is adjacent to the business advertised on the A board. The size of A-boards must not exceed 1 metre high and 1 metre wide, allowing a minimum of 1.8 metres of clear pedestrian footway and must be of a design which does not present any hazards to pedestrians (e.g. moving or rotating signs) or other highway users. In rural areas, A boards are tolerated where there are no complaints, no safety issues and the signage is placed well away from all existing street furniture, especially signage.

Event Signs

Temporary signage for an event can be pursued from the closest A or B road where there is no permanent signage to the venue or area by way of tourism or settlement signage. Additional signage can be considered where visitor numbers increase substantially over that commonly expected (a minimum of ten-fold) for a short period (2 days before and after the event). In such circumstances, additional signage can be considered depending upon other requests for similar signage in the area, clutter and safety implications.

Temporary Development Signs

Current policy requires developers to make applications via a specialist traffic management company for highway authority approval. Unfortunately this requirement has poor compliance.

This leads to a proliferation of black and yellow signs on the highway, causing confusion and visual intrusion with little benefit to traffic.

Temporary signage to housing developments is important as it aids deliveries, construction traffic and potential purchasers. In order to pursue better control for this type of signage, authorisation can now be sought directly through the Authority. Permit signage can be pursued within a mile radius, or from the closest A and/or B roads where there are over 10 or more new homes being erected at a location, consisting of 30 or more bedrooms in total. Further criteria apply to ensure that this signage is properly authorised, safely installed, regularly monitored and removed at the appropriate time. The full terms and conditions for this can be found in Appendix A.

6. Sponsorship Signage

Business signage along the highway can also be pursued through sponsorship as outlined below.

Highway Verge

Guidance has been developed that allows the City, District, Town or Parish Council to permit businesses to sponsor the maintenance of the verge, roundabouts or central reserves in return for business signage located on the highway. Currently, this is limited (size, location and wording) to reduce the visual, manual and cognitive distraction of motorists from other road signage, road users and the surrounding conditions to ensure road safety is not compromised.

Bus Shelters

Worcestershire County Council is highly supportive of advertisement on bus shelters where advertisers contribute to the maintenance of the bus shelter and its environs to ensure a high quality passenger waiting facility. Business advertisement on bus shelters can be pursued through the District Councils, via the Worcestershire Hub.

Contact for more information

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