



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle Chathair
Dhoire & Cheantar
an tSrátha Báin

Derry Cille & Strábane
Deistrick Cooncil

DERRY CITY & STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY

Evidence Base EVB 14: Signs & Outdoor Advertising, December 2019

derrystrabane.com/ldp

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



EVIDENCE BASE PAPER EVB 14

Signs & Outdoor Advertising

This Document is one in a series which comprises the evidence base that informs the preparation of the Derry City and Strabane District Local Development Plan (LDP 2032) Plan Strategy.

It builds upon the suite of thematic Topic Papers prepared and published alongside the LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP), which established the May 2017 baseline position and identified the key issues that needed to be addressed by the LDP.

This Signs & Outdoor Advertising Evidence Base paper updates the baseline POP position and sets out the evidence base that has informed the strategy, designations and policies within the draft LDP Plan Strategy. Evidence has been informed by feedback from public consultation, discussions with Elected Members, input from statutory consultees, stakeholder groups, from other Departments within the Council, liaison with adjoining Councils and through the iterative Sustainability Appraisal process.

The Evidence Base is published as a 'supporting document' in accordance with Article 15(a) of the Planning (LDP) Regulations (NI) 2015.

	CONTENTS	Page
1)	Introduction to Paper	3
2)	Legislative and Policy Context	4
3)	Preferred Options Paper Stage	8
4)	Key Considerations	9
5)	Draft Plan Strategy Stage	10
6)	Sustainability Appraisal	12
7)	Equality Impact Assessment	13
8)	Rural Needs Impact Assessment	13
	Appendix	
	PPS 17 – Guidance for Outdoor Advertisements	14

1.0 Introduction to paper

- 1.1 The information presented in this paper has assisted the Council in developing an informed and innovative approach to setting clearly defined aims and objectives for the management of Signs and Outdoor Advertising. It has taken account of the Council's overall objectives for the District as well as local circumstances in relation to signage.
- 1.2 This paper sets out the Council's strategy for Signs & Outdoor Advertising. It also sets out the main evidence base and legislation / policy framework which has influenced our strategy and in turn the operational policies set out in the LDP Draft Plan Strategy.



2.0 Legislative and Policy Context

- 2.1 Article 5 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that the creation of planning policy as part of the Plan Strategy must be done with the objective of furthering sustainable development and in doing so, must take account of policies and guidance issued in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).
- 2.2 Article 130 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Control of Advertisements, states that provision must be made by regulations under this Act for restricting or regulating the display of advertisements so far as appears to the Department to be expedient in the interests of amenity or public safety. Any such regulations may provide –
- a) for regulating the dimensions, appearance and position of advertisements which may be displayed, the sites on which advertisements may be displayed and the manner in which they are to be affixed to the land;
 - b) for requiring the consent of the council to be obtained for the display of advertisements;
 - c) for applying in relation to any such consent and to applications for such consent any of the provisions of Part 3 or 7 of this Act or Part 3 of the Act of 1965 subject to such adaptations and modifications as may be specified in the regulations.
- 2.3 The regulations may prohibit the display in any area of special control of all advertisements except advertisements of such classes (if any) as may be prescribed.
- 2.4 Where the display of advertisements in accordance with regulations made under this section involves development of land, planning permission for that development shall be deemed to be granted by virtue of this section, and no application shall be necessary in that behalf under Part 3.
- 2.5 Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires all NI Departments and District Councils in exercising their functions, to act in a way they consider to be best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 2.6 The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out the power the council shall exercise in the interests of amenity and public safety only.

Relevant Policy Review & Guidance

- 2.7 In preparing the new LDP, the Council will have regard to several existing plans and documents that set out the main legal and policy context and considerations of what the LDP is required to do and can include, in relation to Advertisements in the District.

The Regional Development Strategy 2035

2.8 The RDS provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. It addresses economic, social and environmental issues aimed at achieving sustainable development and social cohesion. One of the eight aims of the RDS is:

- To support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of Northern Ireland.

2.9 The role of advertisements is not specifically referred to in the RDS but advertising, by its very nature, contributes to the creation of a vibrant and competitive economy.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

2.10 The SPPS is a very important document in guiding the requirements/content of the LDP. It states that where appropriate, Councils should bring forward appropriate policies within the Local Development Plans for the control of outdoor advertisements, tailored to local circumstances. Local policies may also be brought forward for the control of advertisements which affect Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character, and must be compatible with other policies set out within the SPPS.

2.11 The regional strategic objectives for the control of advertisements are to:

- Ensure that outdoor advertisements respect amenity and do not prejudice public safety, including road safety; and
- Help everyone involved in the display of outdoor advertisements contribute positively to the appearance of a well-cared for and attractive environment in our cities, towns, villages and the countywide.

2.12 Other policies set out in the SPPS which relate to the control of advertisements are:

- Consent for the display of advertisements or signs on a Listed Building should only be forthcoming where these are carefully designed and located to respect the architectural form and detailing of the building, and meet the requirements of strategic policy on the Control of Advertisements.
- Consent for the display of advertisements in or close to a Conservation Area should only be granted where they would not adversely affect the overall character, appearance or setting of the area.
- Consent for the display of advertisements in an Area of Townscape Character should only be granted where the overall character and appearance of the area will be maintained, and the proposal meets the requirements of strategic policy on the Control of Outdoor Advertisements.

2.13 The SPPS states that well designed advertising which respects the building or location where it is displayed and which contributes to a quality environment should be encouraged. Consent should be given for the display of an advertisement where it respects amenity, when assessed in the context of the

general characteristics of the locality; and to ensure proposals do not prejudice safety, including road safety.

- 2.14 Care must be taken to ensure that all proposals will not detract from the place where advertising is to be displayed or its surroundings. In particular, it is important to prevent clutter, to adequately control signs involving illumination and to protect features such as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas from the potential adverse effects of advertising. The subject matter of advertising is not normally a material planning consideration.
- 2.15 Particular care is also necessary to ensure that advertisements do not detract from the unique qualities and amenity of our countryside nor diminish our archaeology and built heritage.

PPS17 – Control of Outdoor Advertisements (2006)

- 2.16 Planning Policy Statement 17 ‘Control of Outdoor Advertisements’ sets out planning policy and guidance for the display of outdoor advertisements. It complements the regional commitment to secure a competitive economy whilst affording appropriate protection to amenity and public safety including road safety.
- 2.17 The PPS applies solely to those advertisements, which require express consent under the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 which has subsequently been superseded by The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. Section 130 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 requires the Council to make provisions for managing the display of advertisements in the interests of amenity or public safety.
- 2.18 The PPS sets out the types of advertisements which, under the now superseded, 1992 Regulations are exempt from control by the Council. It also specifies those categories of advertisements which are deemed to be granted by the Regulations; commonly referred to as ‘deemed consent’ provided they conform to the stated limitations for each category and a schedule of standard conditions.
- 2.19 The policy in PPS 17 should also be read together with the following policies in PPS6 ‘Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage’:
- Policy BH 9: The Control of Advertisements on a Listed Building;
 - Policy BH 13: The Control of Advertisements IN A Conservation Area; and
 - Policy ATC 3: The Control of Advertisements in Areas of Townscape Character.
- 2.20 The PPS contains one policy AD1 (Amenity & Public Safety) which states: Consent will be given for the display of an advertisement where: (i) it respects amenity, when assessed in the context of the general characteristics of the locality; and (ii) it does not prejudice public safety. The guidance set out in Annex A for different categories of outdoor advertisement will be taken into account in assessing proposals.

Other Influencing Plans, Strategies and Drivers for Change Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan 2017-2032 – Our Community Plan

- 2.21 Under the Thematic Group Physical and Environmental Regeneration a principle action of the Community Plan is the development of quality public realm in our city, town and in our local areas that is attractive and accessible for citizens, visitors and businesses. Under this thematic group the control of advertisements will help achieve the goals of creating an attractive place for investments and tourism by both promoting business while maintaining environmental quality.

The Derry Walls Management Plan (March 2018).

- 2.22 This documents contains a section on advertising / signage on or adjacent to the Scheduled Walls. It highlights the impact of inappropriate development which may have adverse visual and other impacts upon its setting such as street furniture including seating, signage and railings



- 2.23 The Management Plan states that signs are necessary on and around the Monument for direction of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians for prohibition and for information. No signage should be fixed or mounted on the Monument with the approval of the Management Group. Generally, the fixing of signs directly to vertical surfaces will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances. Any fixings, where permitted, should be attached at the joints between stonework and not to the stones.
- 2.24 The Derry Walls Management Plan advocates that directional signage should ideally be consistent with, and complementary to, the wider Derry city centre signage and all signs should be regularly cleaned as part of a planned maintenance programme.

3.0 Preferred Options Paper

- 3.1 The research findings contained in earlier evidence base papers, together with Members views and advice from the relevant parties/consultees informed the options put forward in the Preferred Options Paper. They have been subjected to a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) as part of the Preferred Options Paper (POP) process.
- 3.2 Within the Preferred Options Paper (POP) The Council set out its approach to Signs & Outdoor Advertisements. The Council aimed to retain the existing PPS 17 – Control of Outdoor Advertisements policies but to include stronger wording and policies on design and materials.

Advertisements	PPS 17	Retain Existing - substantially unchanged. Stronger on design and materials generally		
----------------	--------	---	--	--

- 3.3 Following publication of the POP, three relevant responses were received relating to the proposed option for the Signs and Outdoor Advertisements policy:
 - MLA – LDP should demonstrate awareness of and make provision for new technology – LED signage
 - Inner City Trust - Remove all inappropriate signage in Historic City Conservation Area.
 - An individual - Establish Tourism and Heritage signage

Advertisement Paper - Member Workshops (2016).

- 3.4 It was acknowledged by Members that the relevant Signage / Advertising policy as contained within PPS 17 was regionally applicable in scope and intent and accordingly it was considered that the policy was operating efficiently across the District and there was little need to amend it.

Engagement Meeting with Development Management (2017)

- 3.5 Feedback from Development Management Planning Officers was that the management of signage / advertisements outside the Conservation Areas and ATCs etc. was more problematic. Whilst recognising the economic importance of advertising, it was considered that planning policy would not, in itself, manage advertising across the District. It was suggested that further Council Guidance or Supplementary Planning Guidance should direct a holistic consideration of advertising / signage across the District to reduce / avoid visually intrusive advertisements that can clutter the key entrances to our City and Towns and proliferate unsympathetically along our streetscapes and within our countryside.

4.0 Key Considerations

- 4.1 Signs and Outdoor Advertising is an important feature for promoting goods and services, businesses and directing road users and pedestrians. The display of advertisements is an increasing feature within our City and District. However an over concentration of Signs and Outdoor Advertisements has the potential to impact public safety, our historic environment, our natural environment, road users and pedestrians.
- 4.2 In order to prevent the potential adverse effects associated with advertisements the following points are key considerations within our City and District;
- There must be a balance between the economic need to provide signage against protecting key historic assets, particularly such as the historic Derry City Centre;
 - Signs and Outdoor Advertisements must not jeopardise the safety of pedestrians or road users;
 - There is an identified proliferation of Advertisements at Gateway locations to our settlements;
 - There is an identified proliferation of temporary signage within our town centres.



5.0 Draft Plan Strategy Stage

- 5.1 The Council's strategy for Signs and Outdoor Advertisements has been developed in line with regional policy, the Strategic Growth Plan, specific consultees, POP responses and Member feedback.
- 5.2 The Council's LDP Strategy for Signage and Outdoor Advertisements, in accordance with the SPPS, aims to ensure that proposals requiring advertisement consent do not prejudice amenity or public safety, including road safety, having regard to the specific circumstances of each proposal. The Council will seek well-designed advertising which respects the building or location, including our historically sensitive locations, where it is to be displayed and which contributes to a quality environment. The Council will utilise its Enforcement powers in a focussed manner and work proactively with land-owners to ensure that signage / advertisements are effectively managed and controlled.
- 5.3 The following policies have been developed in line with the Council's LDP Strategy for Signs and Outdoor Advertisements, regional policies and consultation feedback received from key consultees throughout the plan production.

AD 1 Signage & Outdoor Advertisements

- 5.4 The proposed policy wording for AD 1 is as follows:
Planning permission will be granted for the display of an advertisement where: It respects amenity, when assessed in the context of the general characteristics of the locality; and It does not prejudice public safety and does not affect motorists in terms of distracting, blocking sightlines or detracting from existing road signs.
- 5.5 Policy AD 1 - PPS17 (2006) was carried forward into the SPPS (2015) and therefore into regional policy. Consultation feedback has been used to inform the policies brought forward in the LDP PS. DFI Roads reiterates the importance of signage not having an adverse effect on public safety and seeks a reference to LED lighting not currently covered in PPS 17. This has been addressed in the Council's Policy AD 1 in the draft LDP PS.

AD 2 Advertisements and Heritage Assets

- 5.6 The proposed policy wording for AD 2 is as follows:
Advertisement Consent will only be granted, in consultation with the relevant statutory authority, for the display of an advertisement on or adjacent to a Scheduled Monument, Conservation Area, Listed Building or an Area of Townscape Character where:
- The signage or advertising is in keeping with the historic architectural form and detailing, does not detract from the character or setting of the monument, location or building, does not cause or add to clutter in the area, and is not detrimental to public safety.*

- 5.7 Policy AD 2 – Historical or Character Areas. Provides specific policy management for our heritage assets in line with HED feedback, and that of Members, suggesting a ‘presumption against’ such signage. Reference is also included to signage aspects of the Management Plan / Conservation Plan for the historic Derry Walls.
- 5.8 Consultee feedback suggested that there was merit in providing an additional bespoke policy to manage advertisements at a local level in relation to our heritage assets. HED had concerns with the potential of a single policy on outdoor advertisement to underplay the important contribution of heritage assets. It is considered that draft Policy AD 2 in the LDP PS addresses this concern and offers the same protection as the relevant Policies contained in PPS 6 (BH9, BH13 and ATC 3) which relate to signage / advertisement matters on or in such heritage features.
- 5.9 DFI Roads expressed the need for a reference to Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting which has become increasingly widespread in use after the publication of PPS 17 in 2006. This was based on the lack of coverage of LED’s in PPS17 and the potential for their impact on amenity or road safety if used inappropriately. It is considered appropriate to include such a specific reference in the Policy Justification to LED lighting. It is considered that Annex A & B as contained within PPS17 are still relevant and fit-for-purpose.
- 5.10 Historic Environment Division (HED) considered that there was an opportunity for The Council to provide further protection of the distinctive character of its historic environment, with the introduction of a specific Signage / Advertisement policy for such heritage assets. It was felt that such a specific policy would unify and reinforce The Council’s commitment to maintaining the character and setting of such historic assets through the management of advertising within their proximity. It is considered appropriate for such an additional bespoke Signage / Advertisement policy to be drafted for such heritage assets.
- 5.11 The Council’s own Marketing Department recognises the need to constrain temporary banner proliferation, especially in such places as the Foyle Quay, Strabane Tinnies, Ebrington Square and prominent gateway locations, as well as on or near historic buildings.
- 5.12 Policies AD 1 and AD 2 have been developed in accordance with the existing policies and legislation, the SPPS, the Council’s own strategy and specific consultation feedback from key consultees. The policies will permit proposals for advertisement consent only if it does not prejudice the safety of the public, or road users. Advertisement consent will only be granted if it does not detract from heritage assets.

6.0 Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 6.1 Throughout their formulation, the policies contained within the Signs & Outdoor Advertising Chapter have been subject to an ongoing internal sustainability appraisal (SA). This is in addition to the wider external SA, conducted by Shared Environmental Service as part of the wider suite of impact assessments/appraisals required under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The internal appraisal was carried out with the fourteen objectives of the external appraisal in mind (refer to the full wider SA for more information).
- 6.2 The process of sustainability appraisal aims to ensure that a council's approach towards Signs & Outdoor Advertising is the most sustainable of all reasonable options available i.e. having considered any reasonable alternatives. In the case of Signs & Outdoor Advertising policies, it is not considered that any of the alternatives could be considered to be reasonable.
- 6.3 With regard to the degree of sustainability of each the resulting proposed policies, this is outlined below:
- 6.4 The regulation of signage and advertisements is an important contributor to maintaining public safety and consequently delivers a significant positive impact on the objective to improve health and well-being. Encouraging high quality signage is also an important factor in enabling businesses to attract customers and helps to improve the visitor experience in our settlements and rural areas, leading to significant positive impacts on enabling sustainable economic growth. The main thrust of AD2 is the preservation of the character and setting of our heritage assets, leading to significant positive effects on this objective. There are also minor positive impacts on maintaining and enhancing landscape character through ensuring that advertising and signage is appropriate to its surroundings.
- 6.5 Policies AD 1 and AD 2 have been assessed against the 14 sustainability objectives. The SA process identified significant positive effects for the objectives to improve health and well-being, to enable sustainable economic growth and to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.
- 6.6 A draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has also been undertaken and published for consultation with the Draft Plan Strategy. It similarly determines possible adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) as a result of the policies within the LDP. This assessment also includes Ramsar sites under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention.

7.0 Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 Not considered to have any adverse impacts on S75 groups.

8.0 Rural Needs Impact Assessment

8.1 The Rural Needs Act 2016, requires District Councils and other Public Authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

8.2 To 'have due regard' means that a public authority must consciously consider the needs of people in rural areas. How much 'due regard' depends on the circumstances and, in particular, on the relevance of rural needs to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact for people in rural areas, the greater the regard required by the duty.

8.3 Policy AD 1 has the potential to limit signage and advertisement consent in rural areas as the policy states that it must respect the locality and setting. In rural areas this policy could restrict the amount of signage in the countryside which therefore will reduce advertisements for businesses and services. This could lead to a reduction in rural business competitiveness. However, the policies will balance protection of the surrounding area against economic need in order to allow rural business to promote themselves.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – PPS 17- Guidance for Outdoor Advertisements

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.

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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 harmonize 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

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. 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 the surrounding neighborhood, 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 nonreflective 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

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.

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.
- these guidelines also apply to commercial premises on ground floors wishing to advertise on upper floors.

High Level Signs

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

An Unacceptable Breach of Advertisement Control

Where the Department is satisfied that an unacceptable breach of advertisement control has occurred, a warning letter⁶ will normally be served on one or more of the aforementioned persons liable for prosecution (see paragraph 2 above). The warning letter will clearly set out the steps to be taken and time limit for the removal of the unauthorised advertisement. Failure to comply with the contents of the warning letter will result in prosecution.

It should be noted that where an application for advertisement consent is submitted following a warning letter, this of itself will not prevent the Department from pursuing prosecution.

Furthermore, certain situations may arise where the Department considers it expedient to move straight to prosecution proceedings without warning.

Mobile Advertisements

The display of an advertisement stationed on a trailer or other mobile equipment, which is principally used, or designed or adapted principally for use, for the display of advertisements, without the express consent of the Department is a breach of advertisement control.

Such unauthorized mobile advertising is often sited close to the roadside and can have serious implications for road safety. It can cause distraction to drivers and impede visibility. In addition it is generally visually intrusive and can significantly detract from amenity.

The Department has encountered problems in taking effective action against such signage. There is generally nothing that can assist the Department in identifying the person, business or company responsible for the trailer, equipment or apparatus used for displaying the advertisement. Additionally, because these can quickly be moved to an alternative location, in an attempt to evade enforcement action, this can hinder effective enforcement action against landowners.

Accordingly, in the case of unauthorized mobile advertisements, the Department intends to focus enforcement action on the person, business or company being given publicity by the advertisement.

A warning letter, as described in paragraph 6 above, will normally be served on the person, business or company being advertised. In addition to its normal contents, the letter shall advise that the Department will take the view that should the advertisement be moved to another location, without the requisite consent, the person, business or company will subsequently be liable to court action on this matter without further warning/notification by the Department.

The Department's approach to the enforcement of mobile advertisements will apply equally in circumstances where the wheels may have been removed from a trailer or other mobile equipment where the advertisement is displayed.

In addition to planning legislation, there are separate provisions within roads legislation for the control of advertisements (see paragraph 2.10). Where an advertisement is displayed in breach of the roads legislation the Department for Regional Development Roads Service may also instigate the appropriate enforcement action.