

Advertisements and business signs in the open countryside – guidance notes for potential applicants



December 2010

ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Council has always been concerned about the detrimental impact of the uncontrolled erection of advertisements and signs on the character and appearance of the district. As a result of this concern, Local Plan policy IMP23 (Control of Advertisements in the Open Countryside) was drafted to restrict advertisements in the open countryside to that which is reasonably necessary and appropriate in its context. The majority of the district is also within an Area of Special Advertisement Control, which further enables the Council to refuse to allow unnecessary and inappropriate advertisements.

Not unnaturally however and particularly in times of economic recession, businesses in the countryside, especially those geared to the tourist or passing trade, may wish to make their presence known by signing. It is also accepted that in many cases some signing is necessary if the visitors are even to find these facilities. Such signing therefore serves a valuable dual function. However, excessive and inappropriate signing can be visually harmful, and in some cases, be a traffic hazard. It is important, therefore, to strike the right balance.

The purpose of this document is to provide advice and guidance as to what signage the Council considers to 'reasonably necessary', and what is considered to be appropriate in visual terms within the rural setting. *(NOTE: This guidance does not represent formal adopted policy – it is intended as a guidance note for officers and members of South Norfolk Council, and local businesses.)*

POLICY CONTEXT

Policy IMP23 (Control of Advertisements in the Open Countryside) of the South Norfolk Local Plan 2003 allows for the approval of signs provided that they are required in the interests of public safety, or required in order for the identification of the building or use of the land on which they are displayed, and any trade or business carrying on there from. Exceptionally, this policy allows for temporary poster adverts for rural events, and specially designed signposts for isolated country businesses.

These signs broadly fall within 2 categories – signs within the curtilage of the premises to which they relate, and signs outside the curtilage of the premises, these usually being directional signs.

Generally speaking, there appears to be few issues with signs on business premises, as they are normally controlled by way of the submission of a planning application, or in some cases, through confirmation that the proposed sign does not require formal planning permission as it is considered to be permitted development under the Town & Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 1992. Directional signs located on private land not within the premises to which they relate **will always require advertisement consent.**

GUIDANCE & PROCEDURE

TOURIST RELATED FACILITIES

The majority of these facilities should be able to apply to Norfolk County Council for a formal brown directional sign. Where businesses have brown signs erected, there should be no need to erect additional directional signs outside of the premises, however, applications for additional directional signs can be assessed on their individual merit. (Note: 'Tourist Related Facilities' can include restaurants, pubs etc., but not Farm Shops or commercial business premises.) Where appropriate and necessary, businesses are encouraged to apply to the District Council for the erection of directional signs.

NON-TOURIST RELATED FACILITIES (I.E. BUSINESS DIRECTIONAL SIGNS)

Where a sign is considered reasonably necessary, the Council is keen to guide businesses towards erecting signs appropriate for their setting. However, it is important that directional advertisement signs do not conflict with or in any way mimic standard traffic signs (erected by the County Council as Local Highway Authority), and that they are **not** located on highway land. Outlined below are examples of what is considered to be appropriate in terms of location and design.

PREMISES ON CLASS 'A' ROADS

Generally, premises are readily seen and can be identified by signs within the curtilage. Advance directional signs should not therefore normally be required. However, exceptionally, where an access is considered hazardous in location terms, advance directional signs may be appropriate. Where this is the case, they should normally not exceed 1.5 square metres in area, should be of horizontal proportions, and have a maximum height (to the top of the sign) of 2.5 metres.

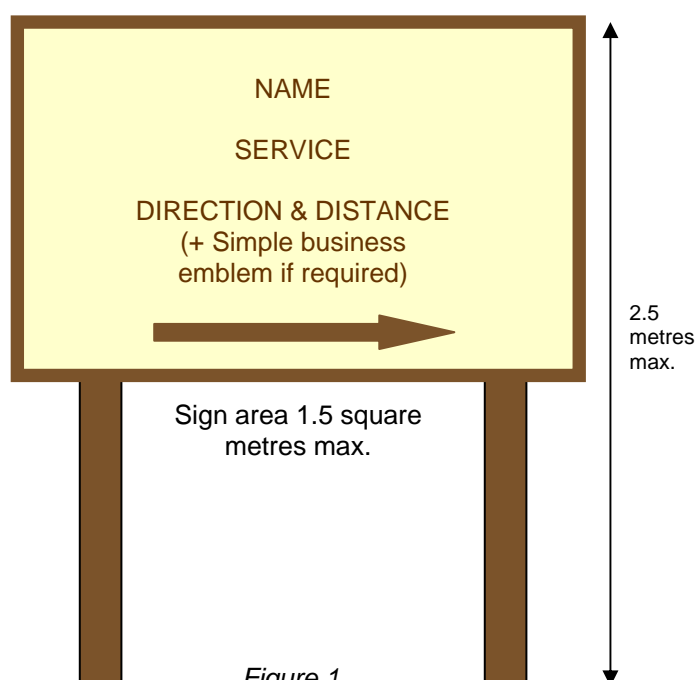


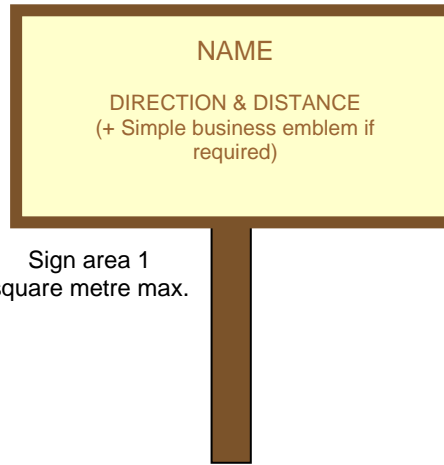
Figure 1

Background colours such as beige, creams and greens are likely to be more appropriate in a rural setting. Lettering is often most clearest in white, brown or black. Signs can be made of metal or plastic, but must NOT have a reflective surface. The mounting posts should be metal with a painted or plastic coated finish, and should ideally have a diameter of between 80 – 120mm. Text on the sign should be limited to just the business name, and (in the case of advance signs), basic directional information.

NOTE: All signs will have to also comply with NCC: Highways policy G3.11 which states that '*signs or advertisements shall not conflict with highway signs, visibility sight lines, or be positioned and / or configured so as to be an unacceptable distraction to road users.*'

PREMISES ON OTHER ROADS

Discrete advance signing away from main roads indicating the presence of a business some distance away may receive consent if in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that business justifies such signing (e.g. heavily dependant on passing trade). Normally a single sign in advance of a junction will be permissible, but where a business is particularly tortuously located, further (smaller) repeater signs may be acceptable. Generally, the premises should be located outside a village and be no more than 4 miles from the first or only sign. Advance signs should be no larger than 1 square metre in area, with repeater signs no larger than 0.2 square metres in area. Maximum height to the top of the sign should be 2.5 metres. Sign content should be minimal, with name, service, direction / distance displayed. (See figure 2 below.)



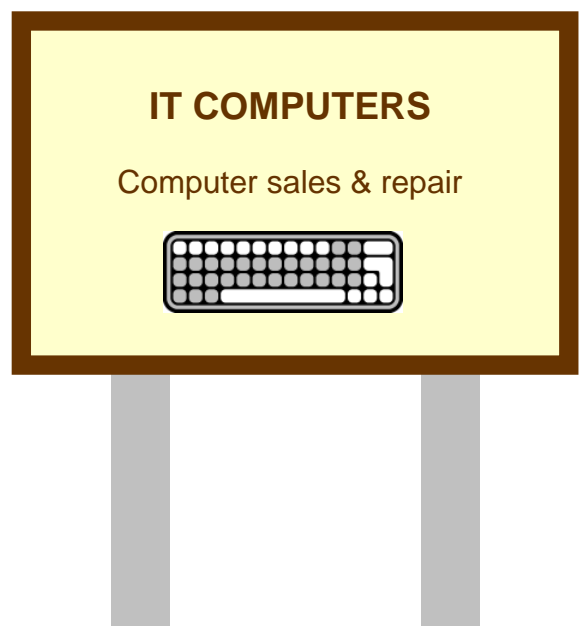
SIGN SHARING – to avoid a proliferation of inappropriate signs in one particular location, consideration will be given to several businesses sharing a larger sign. Further advice can be obtained from planning officers.

NOTE: Again, all signs will have to also comply with NCC: Highways policy G3.11 which states that *'signs or advertisements shall not conflict with highway signs, visibility sight lines, or be positioned and / or configured so as to be an unacceptable distraction to road users.'*

REPEATER SIGNS



Example repeater sign



Example sign at entrance to premises

Figure 2

EXAMPLE SIGN

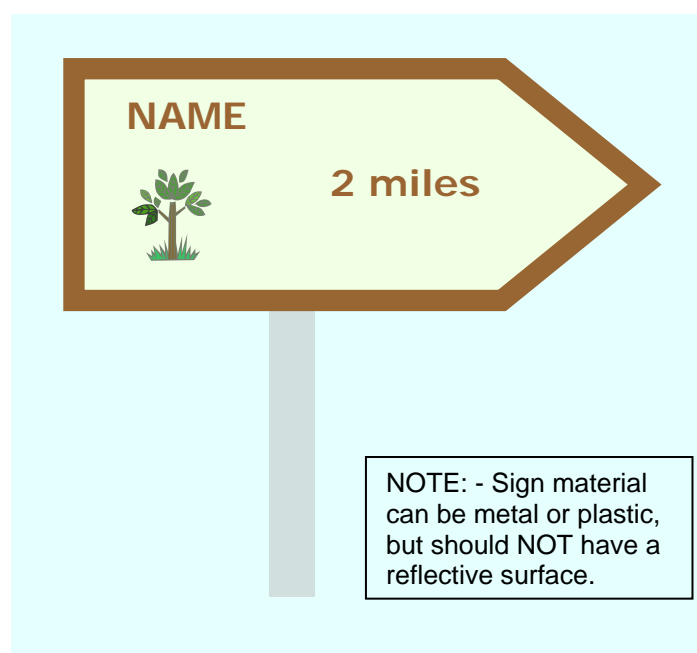


Figure 3

Example of a sign that could be placed
in advance of a road junction.

Procedure for Applying for a Business Sign

Consider submitting initial proposals to South Norfolk Council for pre-application comments. Planning@s-norfolk.gov.uk

Submit application for advertisement consent to South Norfolk Council.
Application fee currently £95.

Application normally determined within 8 weeks.

Decision notice issued.

If approved, sign can be erected by the applicant immediately. Permission lasts for 5 years.

EXAMPLE LOCATION OF SIGNS

