



Planning Policy  
Statement 17  
(PPS 17)

Control of  
Outdoor Advertisements



An Agency within the Department of the

**Environment**

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# Planning Policy Statement 17 (PPS 17)

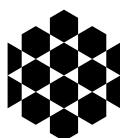
## Control of Outdoor Advertisements

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) set out the policies of the Department of the Environment on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

This PPS sets out the Department's planning policy and guidance for the control of outdoor advertisements. It complements the Government's commitment to securing a competitive economy whilst affording appropriate protection to amenity and public safety including road safety.

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**Environment**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## Preamble

The Department of the Environment is responsible for planning control in Northern Ireland, including control of outdoor advertisements. The Planning Service, an Agency within the Department, administers its planning functions.

The Department has a statutory duty, laid down in Article 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, to formulate and co-ordinate policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development. The Department is required to ensure that such policy is in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy.

The Department's planning policies are normally issued through Planning Policy Statements and PPS 1 'General Principles' advises that:

*"Planning Policy Statements set out the policies of the Department on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals."*

This Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 17 'Control of Outdoor Advertisements' sets out the Department's planning policy and guidance for the display of outdoor advertisements. It complements the Government's commitment to securing a competitive economy whilst affording appropriate protection to amenity and public safety including road safety.

The PPS applies solely to those advertisements which require the express consent of the Department, under the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 (see Paragraph 2.3).

**The policy in this Statement should be read together with the following policies contained in PPS 6 '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.**

**The policy and guidance in this Statement supersedes Policy DES 9 of the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland. Where Policy DES 9 is referred to elsewhere in the Planning Strategy the policy and guidance in this Statement will take precedence.**

**This Statement also replaces the following Belfast Divisional Planning Office Development Guidance Notes:**

- **DGN 2: Control of Large Scale Advertisements;**
- **DGN 2A: Control of Large Scale Advertisements on Shankill Road Belfast;**
- **DGN 2B: Control of Large Scale Advertisements on Woodvale Road Belfast; and**
- **DGN 2C: Control of Large Scale Advertisements at Carlisle Circus Belfast.**

This Policy Statement has been subject to an equality impact screening exercise, in line with the statutory obligation contained in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The outcome of this exercise indicates that the PPS is unlikely to have any significant adverse implications for equality of opportunity or community relations.

Nothing in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources will be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure will be subject to economic appraisal, other relevant assessments and will also have to be considered having regard to the overall availability of resources.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Advertising is a multi-million pound industry and now forms part of everyday culture, often adding colour to our streets. It is a good indicator of business health, can be a valuable source of information and is viewed by many as a form of entertainment in itself. Outdoor advertising is a key element of the industry and contributes to the creation of a vibrant and competitive economy.
- 1.2 Most outdoor advertisements are transient in nature as signage is regularly updated and premises change hands. Some advertisements are clearly temporary, such as signs notifying the public of a forthcoming event or large scale advertisements screening building sites. There are however those advertisements which are more permanent, for example traditional fascia signs above shops.
- 1.3 All advertisements affect the appearance of the building or place where they are displayed. Given the potential impact of outdoor advertising on amenity, both positive and negative, there is a need to balance the requirements of the industry with the protection and, where possible, enhancement of the character and appearance of our cities, towns and villages. There is a corresponding need to ensure that advertisements will not prejudice public safety.
- 1.4 The advertising industry is generally aware of ongoing change in the pattern of retail activity and it is the business of the industry to respond to the legitimate commercial needs of different businesses - everything from retail parks and high street stores to small hotels and corner shops.
- 1.5 The Department for its part wishes to ensure that care is taken with the display of outdoor advertisements so that they do not prejudice amenity or public safety, having regard to the specific circumstances of each proposal. Overall the Department wishes to encourage the provision of well designed advertising which respects the building or location where it is displayed and which contributes to a quality environment. There is a particular need to protect the unique qualities and amenity of the countryside and important townscape features, such as listed buildings and their settings, conservation areas and areas of townscape character.

## 2.0 Policy and Legislative Context

### Policy Context

- 2.1 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) seeks to promote employment and support economic development of the region while sustaining a high quality environment. 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. Care however must be exercised given the potential significant impact that outdoor advertising may have on the environment.
- 2.2 Road safety is a key priority for Government, and the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy seeks to promote an integrated approach to the planning, coordination and delivery of the Government's road safety activities. Inappropriate outdoor advertising has the potential to impact significantly on road safety. Accordingly, in assessing proposals for the display of advertisements, care must be taken to ensure that the safety of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians is not jeopardised.

### Legislative Arrangements for the Control of Advertisements

- 2.3 Article 67 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 requires the Department to make provision, by regulations, for restricting or regulating the display of advertisements so far as it appears to the Department to be expedient in the interests of amenity or public safety. The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 as amended is the relevant statutory rule.
- 2.4 Under the Regulations some types of advertisement are exempt from control by the Department provided certain conditions are met<sup>1</sup>. Examples include election posters and most non-illuminated advertisements displayed inside shops.
- 2.5 Other specified categories of advertisement 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<sup>2</sup>. Examples include small plaques on business premises and certain fascia signs.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (NI) 1992 Schedule 2*

<sup>2</sup> *The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (NI) 1992 Schedule 3. It should also be noted that the Regulations provide the Department with the power to make a direction withdrawing "deemed consent".*



- 2.6 All other advertisements require the Department's express consent, commonly referred to as consent to display an advertisement.
- 2.7 Article 84 of the Planning Order states that it is an offence to display an advertisement in contravention of the Advertisement Regulations. Further information on this matter together with advice on the Department's position regarding the enforcement of advertisement control is set out in Annex B.

## The Definition of an Advertisement

- 2.8 The Planning Order 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 purposes of, advertisement, announcement or direction, and (without prejudice to the preceding provisions of this definition) includes any hoarding or similar structure used, or designed or adapted for use, and anything else principally used, or designed or adapted principally for use, for the display of advertisements, and references to the display of advertisements shall be constructed accordingly."*

## Standard Conditions

- 2.9 Under the provisions of the Advertisement Regulations all advertisements whether requiring the Department's express consent or not, with one minor exception<sup>3</sup> are automatically subject to the following standard conditions:
1. Any advertisements displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a clean and tidy condition to the reasonable satisfaction of the Department.
  2. Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a safe condition.
  3. Where an advertisement is required to be removed under the Advertisement Regulations, the removal shall be carried out to the reasonable satisfaction of the Department.

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<sup>3</sup> Standard condition 4 does not apply to Class F or G advertisements contained within the Regulations. These are election posters or advertisements required to be displayed by Parliament.

4. No advertisement may be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.
5. No advertisement may be displayed on or so as to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any road traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air, or so as otherwise to render hazardous the use of any road, railway, waterway (including coastal waters) or aerodrome (civil or military).

## **Roads Legislation**

- 2.10 In addition to planning legislation, there are separate provisions within roads legislation for the control of advertisements. Article 87 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 makes it an offence to display any advertisement on a public road, footway or verge or on any tree or structure in or on a public road. Article 21 of the same Order makes it an offence to erect or exhibit any advertisement or notice sited or designed primarily to be visible from a special road or which is likely to prejudice the safety of traffic using a special road. A special road is one designated under Article 15 of the Roads Order and at present these comprise the motorway network and Westlink.
- 2.11 Article 34 of the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 makes it an offence to display any sign which resembles a traffic sign on or near a public road.

## 3.0 Policy Objectives

3.1 The main objectives of this Statement 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 to contribute positively to the appearance of a well-cared for and attractive environment in our cities, towns, villages and the countryside.

## 4.0 Planning Policy

In exercise of its responsibility for planning control (including advertisement control) in Northern Ireland the Department assesses development proposals against all planning policies and other material considerations that are relevant to it.

The planning policy of this Statement must therefore be read in conjunction with the relevant contents of the Department's development plans and other planning policy publications, including the Regional Development Strategy. The Department will also have regard to the contents of published supplementary planning guidance documents.

The following policy sets out the main considerations the Department will take into account in assessing proposals for the display of outdoor advertisements that require the Department's consent. The provisions of this policy will prevail unless there are other overriding policy or material considerations that outweigh it and justify a contrary decision.

### **Policy AD 1 Amenity and Public Safety**

**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.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

4.1 The display of advertisements is an ever-increasing feature of our main streets and commercial centres, often adding colour and interest. Care, however, must be taken to ensure that an advertisement will not detract from the place where it is to be displayed or its surroundings and that it will not prejudice public safety. In particular it is important to prevent clutter, adequately control signs involving illumination and to protect features such as listed buildings and conservation areas from the potential adverse effects of advertising.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Under the provisions of Article 67(1) of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 the interests of “amenity” and “public safety” are the only considerations that can be assessed in the exercise of advertisement control.

### *Amenity*

- 4.4 In relation to advertisements the term amenity is usually understood to mean its effect upon the appearance of the building or structure or the immediate neighbourhood where it is displayed, or its impact over long distance views.
- 4.5 A well designed and sensitively sited advertisement, where thought has been given to size, colours, siting and levels of illumination, can contribute positively to the visual qualities of an area. All too often, however, advertisements are added to a building or placed in a location as an afterthought. The result is that a good building, neighbourhood or sensitive location can be easily spoiled by poorly designed advertising, which appears over dominant, unduly prominent or simply out of place.
- 4.6 A large number of advertisements on a building or along a road can create clutter and be disruptive to the appearance and character of an area. When preparing designs for new signage or advertisements, the opportunity should be taken to rationalise the number of signs on a building or in an area and remove those which are redundant or excessive.
- 4.7 In assessing the impact of an advertisement or sign on amenity the Department will take into account all of the following matters:
  - (a) the effect the advertisement will have on the general characteristics of the area, including the presence of any features of historic, archaeological, architectural, landscape, cultural or other special interest;
  - (b) the position of the advertisement on the host building and its scale and size in relation to that building;

- (c) the cumulative effect of the proposal when read with other advertisements on the building or in the surrounding area and whether the proposal will result in clutter;
- (d) the size, scale, dominance and siting of the advertisement in relation to the scale and characteristics of the surrounding area;
- (e) the design and materials of the advertisement, or the structure containing the advertisement, and its impact on the appearance of the building on which it is to be attached;
- (f) in the case of a freestanding sign, the design and materials of the structure and its impact on the appearance and character of the area where it is to be located; and
- (g) the impact of the advertisement, including its size, scale and levels of illumination, on the amenities of people living nearby and the potential for light pollution.

4.8 The amenity of the countryside is particularly important and there is a need to protect its unique qualities from the negative effects of advertising. The only advertisements likely to be acceptable in the countryside are those proposed on site and which relate to existing or approved commercial enterprises. These should be small in scale and not detract from the quality and character of the local landscape.

### *Public Safety*

- 4.9 Advertisements by their very nature are designed to attract the attention of passers-by and therefore have the potential to impact on public safety.
- 4.10 In assessing the impact of an advertisement on public safety the Department will have regard to its effect upon the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport on land (including the safety of pedestrians), on or over water or in the air.
- 4.11 The main types of advertisements which are likely to pose a threat to public safety are:-
- (a) those which obstruct or impair sight lines at corners, bends or at a junction or at any point of access to a road;

- (b) those which, by virtue of their size or siting, would obstruct or confuse a road user's view or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or traffic signal, or those which would be likely to distract road users because of their unusual design;
- (c) signs which leave insufficient clearance on or above any part of the road or footpath, or insufficient lateral clearance for vehicles on the carriageway;
- (d) those which are located so as to impair the safety of any person looking at them because there is no protection from moving vehicles or where the footpath is narrow at the point where the public stop to look at them;
- (e) illuminated signs:
  - where the means of illumination is directly visible from any part of the road;
  - which, because of their colour, could be mistaken for, or confused with, traffic lights or any other authorised signals; and
  - which, because of their size or brightness, could result in glare or dazzle, or otherwise distract road users especially in wet or misty weather;
- (f) signs which incorporate moving or apparently moving elements in their display, especially where the whole message is not displayed at one time therefore increasing the time taken to read the whole message;
- (g) those which resemble traffic signs because of their colour or content or those which embody directional or other traffic elements and which could therefore cause confusion with traffic signs;
- (h) signs sited or designed primarily to be visible from a motorway or other special road; and
- (i) those which cause possible interference with a navigational light or an aerial beacon.

- 4.12 In assessing the impact on public safety, the vital consideration for the Department will be whether the advertisement itself, or the exact location proposed for its display, is likely to be so distracting or confusing that it creates a hazard to, or endangers, people in the vicinity, be they drivers, cyclists or pedestrians.
- 4.13 The Department will also bear in mind that, on occasion, some advertisements can positively contribute to public safety, for example, by directing drivers and others to their destination.
- 4.14 Thoughtful siting and illumination can overcome many of the potential hazards listed above. Public safety issues are less likely to occur where an advertisement is proposed within an existing industrial or commercial centre, and when the level of illumination proposed is appropriate to the location.
- 4.15 In assessing the brightness of signs, these will be expected to accord with the guidance contained in the Institute of Lighting Engineers Technical Report No 5 (2nd edition).
- 4.16 Where appropriate the Department will consult other relevant public bodies who have an interest in the safe display of advertisements. In particular, the Department will take into account the advice of the Department for Regional Development's Roads Service on matters of road safety.

### *Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character*

- 4.17 Specific policies for the control of advertisements affecting Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs) are set out in Planning Policy Statement 6 'Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage'. Additional guidance for the display of advertisements in particular Conservation Areas is set out in the relevant designation documents and design guides produced by the Department. Additional guidance for the display of advertisements in particular ATCs may be included in any supplementary guidance produced by the Department for the ATC.



## 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.

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### *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.**

## Annex B: The Enforcement of Advertisement Control

1. Article 84(2) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 states that any person who displays an advertisement in contravention of the Advertisement Regulations is guilty of an offence and on summary conviction is liable to a fine with the potential for further daily fines in the case of a continuing offence<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Article 84(3) provides that a person shall be deemed to display an advertisement where it is displayed on land of which he is the owner or occupier, or it gives publicity to his goods, trade, business or other concerns.
2. In effect, this means that the Department may in such cases seek to prosecute:
  - (a) the person, business or company responsible for the advertisement;
  - (b) the landowner or the occupier of the land;
  - (c) the person, business or company being advertised; or
  - (d) any combination of these<sup>5</sup>.
3. The Planning Order also makes it clear that in the case of (b) or (c) above a person shall not be guilty of an offence if he can prove that the unauthorised advertisement was displayed without his knowledge or consent.
4. Planning Policy Statement 9 'The Enforcement of Planning Control', sets out the general approach the Department will take when dealing with, amongst other matters, unauthorised advertisements. PPS 9 advises that the Department will normally pursue court action for unauthorised advertisements which it considers unacceptable.
5. The purpose of this annex is to complement the advice in PPS 9 by outlining the steps the Department will take in response to an unauthorised advertisement that it considers is unacceptable.

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<sup>4</sup> *The maximum fine is currently £1,000 with a daily maximum for a continuing offence of £100. The Department is however bringing forward legislation that proposes an increase in the maximum fine to £2,500 and the daily maximum fine to £250.*

<sup>5</sup> *There is no requirement where enforcement is taken that this will be against all those with an interest in the land or otherwise involved in the display of an unauthorised advertisement.*

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## **An Unacceptable Breach of Advertisement Control**

6. Where the Department is satisfied that an unacceptable breach of advertisement control has occurred, a warning letter<sup>6</sup> 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.
7. 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.
8. Furthermore, certain situations may arise where the Department considers it expedient to move straight to prosecution proceedings without warning.

### ***Mobile Advertisements***

9. 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.
10. Such unauthorised 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.
11. 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.

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<sup>6</sup> *All references to service of a warning letter will not preclude service by fax or other electronic means.*

12. Accordingly, in the case of unauthorised mobile advertisements, the Department intends to focus enforcement action on the person, business or company being given publicity by the advertisement.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.





