

Guidance and Criteria for Assessment of Applications

This document is intended as a guide for operators or owners of establishments or facilities intending to apply for directional highway signs. The signs are usually black text and border on a white background and may be proposed for destinations that are not eligible for the 'brown' tourist signs.

Private Highway Directional Signing may be considered appropriate where **“a permanently established premises, building, facility or establishment who’s predominant purpose is for local or community use but is also available for use by visitors from outside of the local area.”**

To be considered eligible for private highway directional signing in West Sussex an establishment will have to satisfy a number of criteria and be assessed against a range of traffic management, road safety and environmental issues relevant to the local area. The final decision whether to approve and offer private highway directional signing rests with the highway authority.

It is recognised that clear signing can aid the movement of road users and pedestrians throughout the County. However, too many signs can result in a situation that is confusing for road users and pedestrians as well as resulting in a deformation of the predominantly rural nature of West Sussex.

West Sussex County Council signed up for Campaign for the Protection of Rural England’s clutter challenge in 2005 and is committed to reducing the number of unnecessary signs on the highway.

County Roads / Trunk Roads and Motorways

The County Council is the highway authority for maintainable roads in West Sussex, excepting Trunk Roads and Motorways that are the direct responsibility of the Highways England. All applications for private highway directional signs for establishments within the County are initially routed to the County Council (the Home Traffic Authority), who will consider if such signs are suitable for the highway network.

The specific criteria relating to Trunk Roads and Motorways (which within West Sussex are the A27 through its entire length, the M23 and the A23 from its junction with the M23 south to the county boundary) is the responsibility of Highways England.

Criteria Applicable to All Applicants

General

Signs will only be provided on the grounds of directing the travelling public to eligible establishments and to safely direct traffic where the foregoing town/village signage ceases to adequately direct.

Applications for signs will be considered on the need to provide clear directional information to road users and not on the advertising or promotional benefits to the applicant or establishment. Electronic media can be used to obtain directions and site location information, i.e. the destination's own website, mapping websites, social media and satellite navigation.

The principles of signing on the highway are governed by regulations issued by the Department for Transport and are set out in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 and the Traffic Signs Manual.

Signing

The use of generic signing indicating types of establishments shall be preferred wherever possible, with symbols used rather than worded legends wherever practicable. Examples of generic worded legends are 'Community Centre', 'Library' and 'Church'.

Where individually named signs are permitted the maximum permitted legend for each destination shall be 26 characters (including spaces).

Where sites are multi-functional, only the primary function shall be signed either generically or individually.

The size of the characters and therefore the overall size of the sign are generally governed by the regulations but shall ultimately be determined by the Highway Authority with due consideration to the location and environment

Only the minimum number of signs required to give adequate directional information shall be proposed.

A maximum of six individual destinations would normally be allowable on any one sign or at any one location in order that the destination legends can be assimilated by the moving road user. This number may be reduced if the amount of existing directional signing is considered to have reached a maximum).

In general, signing will only be permitted no further than from the nearest A or B class road, or in the urban situation from the nearest main through route in that particular area. Usually a maximum-signed distance of 3 miles from the establishment will apply. When the city, town or village in which the establishment is located is adequately signed on normal (non-Trunk) direction signs, then private directional signs indicating the individual establishment will not normally be provided outside of that settlement covered by the city, town or village nameplates.

Exceptions may be considered where, in predominately rural areas, the public may not necessarily associate that those facilities are available within the town or village situated off the local through route.

Where establishments lie on a through route they will not normally be signed individually unless the entrance or the establishment is not readily apparent to the road user.

To prevent an unnecessary proliferation of signs, where a number of facilities requesting signing are in close proximity, priority of signing will be given on the basis of:

- The number of likely visitors from outside of the area
- The number of likely local visitors

Practical Assessment

When further assessing an application, which may satisfy the foregoing criteria, practical consideration will also need to be given to the following:

- Road safety and/or traffic management considerations will take priority when considering the overall signing at a particular location.
- The number of existing destinations signed at a particular junction must be taken into account together with the number of similar establishments or facilities in the local area.
- Where there is a possibility that other similar local establishment may apply for or become eligible to apply for signs then it is unlikely that individual establishments will be specifically named on signs.
- It may be appropriate to remove, amend, replace or otherwise alter an existing sign assembly, including other directional signs, in order to accommodate the provision of additional establishments. The applicant will be expected to meet all costs in such a case.
- Where the Highway Authority receives separate applications that relate to a number of establishments in the same area then it is likely that a scheme combining the requests on joint signs will be recommended. This includes replacing existing directional signs with combined signs in preference to additional signs to the existing assembly if practicable.
- Where the provision of signs is considered appropriate then continuity between the furthest sign from the signed destination and the destination itself must be maintained. In some cases this requirement will be a limiting factor on the number of signs and the distance from the destination where signing can commence.
- The road layout in the general area such as one-way systems, other regulatory or physical restrictions and preferred routes will all be contributory factors in the assessment of each application.

In areas where there are potentially large numbers of facilities a review of the existing and potential signing requirements will be undertaken to ensure that a fair and controlled approach to highway signing in such areas can be maintained.

Specific Criteria for each type of establishment

The criteria for assessment of each type of establishment are set out below.

'Outside of the local area' can be considered as those travelling from outside of a 5 mile

radius of the establishment.

Churches/Places of Worship

Signs may be considered where the place of worship is located away from well-signed routes. The destination should be regularly attended by a substantial number of people unfamiliar with the area on a regular basis for weddings, christenings and funerals.

Community centres, Village halls

The applicant must demonstrate that the facility attracts substantial numbers of visitors from outside of the local area on a regular basis. Information of types of function and approximate attendance will be required.

Industrial Estates & Business Parks

Signing for individual businesses / units within the Estates will not be considered unless there is a recognised benefit to do so on traffic management grounds for community orientated destinations.

Road / sector / area signing within the estates would normally be provided by the estate management company in conjunction with the relevant District / Borough Council.

Schools

Signing will not normally be considered, as the opportunity exists to provide adequate directional information to parents and pupils prior to enrolment.

Exceptions may be made for large secondary schools or colleges, or where additional facilities (community halls, adult education, Children & family centres etc.) that regularly attract a significant number of visitors from outside of the local area.

Sporting Venues

The venue should hold regular fixtures during an established season attended by visitors from outside the local area.

Nursing/Care homes

Signing will not normally be considered, as the opportunity exists to provide adequate directional information to clients prior to admittance.

Exceptions may be considered for NHS affiliated establishments & Hospices.

Medical surgeries/clinics

Signing will not normally be considered, as the opportunity exists to provide adequate directional information to patients prior to attendance. Exceptions may be made where the facility provides out of hours emergency treatment, covers a wide patient area or is located in a predominantly rural location.

Retail

Under no circumstances will individual shops be named on signs.

Groups of shops may be included on generic signing for by-passed communities. Local shopping parades are not normally considered eligible for signing as by their nature they provide a service predominantly to the local community.

Large purpose built retail outlets, such as superstores and retail parks are usually catered for under existing local direction signing, and new applications are currently controlled to limit the number of signs on the basis of local road safety / traffic management needs.

Children & family centres

Signing will be considered where the establishment is not co-located with another establishment.

Others

For information on establishments not specifically listed above please contact West Sussex County Council for advice.

Costs for proposal, installation and maintenance of Signs:

The County Council does not have the facility to design and install private directional signing on behalf of an applicant. Applicants will be required to commission a company to design a sign proposal that is compliant with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 and Chapter 7 Traffic Signs Manual 2013. The contractor will require £10 million public liability insurance and appropriate New Roads and Street Works 1991 accreditation in order to install the equipment on the highway.

PLEASE NOTE – All new signs should be stand alone or fixed to existing street furniture. The County Council will not accept changes/amendments to large Advance Direction Signs.

Upon satisfactory completion of the installation the signs shall come under the control of the appropriate Highway Authority, who may move, alter or otherwise change the sign faces and/or locations as may be considered appropriate.

All costs connected with the maintenance of approved signs shall be borne by the Applicant.

Applicants shall inform the County Council as soon as possible in writing should the available facilities indicated at the time of application change or be discontinued, or if the destination signed closes. The costs of any works for amendment or removal of signs shall be borne by the Applicant.

Should the standard or availability of facilities provided by the operator become the subject of complaints, which are not resolved to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority, then the signs may be removed from the highway until such complaints are resolved. All costs incurred in any such removal and/or subsequent replacement shall be borne by the site operator.

Insurance:

The Applicant is advised to have the replacement of the signs due to theft, vandalism or accidental damage included as an item on business insurance.

Non works costs:

The non-refundable fee for policy assessment and consideration for Private Signing is: -

£311.15 administration and policy assessment

The County Council is not able to provide a design and installation service. Applicants will be required to commission a company to design a sign proposal that is compliant with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 and Chapter 7 Traffic Signs Manual 2013. The contractor will require £10 million public liability insurance and appropriate New Roads and Street Works 1991 accreditation in order to install the equipment on the highway.

No works on the highway are permitted unless permission is granted by West Sussex County Council. Any contractor working on behalf of a third party should contact WSCC before undertaking any works on the highway.