

# Planning Guidance (Wales), Technical Advice Note (Wales) 7, Outdoor Advertisement Control - November 1996

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## **Introduction**

1. This Technical Advice Note (Wales) (TAN) should be read in conjunction with "Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy". Planning Guidance, Technical Advice Notes and circulars should be taken into account by local planning authorities in Wales in the preparation of development plans. They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by the Secretary of State and his Inspectors in the determination of called-in planning applications and appeals.

2. Documents listed in the Reference column in the margin provide information which should be read in conjunction with the TAN.

**Reference**  
**Welsh Office**  
**Circular 14/92**  
**Town and Country**  
**Planning (Control**  
**of Advertisements)**  
**Regulations 1992**

**Welsh Office**  
**Circular 70/94**  
**Town and Country**  
**Planning (Control**

3. The control regime specified by the Secretary of State enables local planning authorities to control virtually all outdoor advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety. Some types of advertisement are exempted from detailed control, other specified categories of advertisement qualify for deemed consent, provided they conform to the stated conditions and limitations for each category.

*of Advertisements)  
(Amendment)  
Regulations 1994  
The Town and  
Country Planning  
(Control of  
Advertisements)  
Regulations 1992  
(SI No 1992/666)*

*"Outdoor  
Advertisements and  
Signs - A Guide for  
Advertisers" DOE  
and Welsh Office,  
1995*

### **The Role of Guidance on Design**

4. Local planning authorities may produce design guidance on outdoor advertisements and shop-fronts, especially for conservation areas or where vernacular buildings play an important part in the appearance of a neighbourhood. Such guidance needs to recognise the importance of advertisements to the national economy and should not stifle original designs or new display techniques.

5. Designers should be prepared to compromise on matters of corporate design where it is unsuitable in a particular area, but corporate designs should not be refused simply because a local planning authority dislikes the design.

*Technical Advice  
Note (Wales) 4  
Retailing and Town  
Centres, 1996*

### **Criteria for Dealing with Advertisement Applications**

6. The general approach to dealing with advertisement applications is similar to the process of dealing with planning applications but with two important differences. First, the display of outdoor advertisements can only be controlled in the interests of amenity and public safety. Second, it is accepted that (with one minor exception in Areas of Special Control, where an applicant needs to show a reasonable requirement for an advertisement) anyone proposing to display an advertisement needs that advertisement in that particular location, whether for commercial or other reasons.

*TCP (Control of  
Advertisements)  
Regulations, 1992,  
Regulation 19(2)(b)*

### **Consideration of Amenity**

7. Businesses located in the countryside expect to be able to advertise their whereabouts, especially to visitors, but care should be taken to ensure that signs are designed and sited to harmonise with their setting, and that a proliferation of individually acceptable advertisements does not spoil the appearance of open countryside. Wherever practicable, businesses in the same general location, or in by-passed communities, should be encouraged to combine their

*Planning Guidance  
(Wales): Planning  
Policy, 1996,  
paragraph 195*

essential advertising needs so as to avoid a proliferation of advance signs. By-passed communities may wish to consider whether an officially approved highway sign can be produced to meet the needs of the whole community.

8. When it is appropriate to consider how brightly advertisements should be illuminated, local planning authorities should have regard to available guidance.

9. Guidance on large poster hoardings is included in the Annex to this note.

#### **Considerations of Public Safety**

10. In assessing an advertisement's impact on public safety, local planning authorities should 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, and in the air, including the likely behaviour of vehicle drivers who will see the advertisement, possible confusion with any traffic sign or other signal, and possible interference with a navigation light or an aerial beacon.

11. When considering public safety factors, local planning authorities should consult other relevant organisations such as the highway authority who have an interest.

#### **Advertisement Control Policies**

12. Development plan policies, controlling outdoor advertisements in areas or parts of areas where the display of poorly designed advertisements will be especially harmful, will be a material factor in considering an advertisement application. Development plans should give clear guidance to prospective advertisers on the likely acceptability of their proposals and provide a basis for rational and consistent decisions on advertisement applications. Even though advertisement control policies or design guidance may have been formulated having regard to matters of amenity and public safety, references to these policies and guidance cannot by themselves be the decisive factor in determining whether an advertisement is to be permitted. It will always be necessary to assess the specific amenity and public safety merits of the proposed advertisement display in relation to the particular application site.

#### **Reasons for Advertisement Control Decisions**

13. Local planning authorities should give reasons which are complete, precise, clear, specific and relevant to the particular application for any advertisement control refusal.

*The Institute of  
Lighting Engineers  
Technical Report  
Number 5 (Second  
Edition) available  
from the Institute of  
Lighting Engineers,  
Lennox House,  
9 Lawford Road,  
Rugby, CV21 2DZ*

*Welsh Office  
Circular 14/92,  
Annex, Appendix B*

*Planning Guidance  
(Wales): Planning  
Policy, 1996,  
paragraph 194*

They should set out why an advertisement proposal is contrary to the interests of amenity, or prejudicial to public safety, **at the particular site.**

### **Advertisement Control Conditions**

14. When an advertisement to which the 1992 Regulations apply does not qualify for deemed consent, an application must be made to the local planning authority for express consent. The Regulations also provide for the grant of consent subject to such additional conditions as they think fit. Use of this power may enable the local planning authority to allow an advertisement proposal which would otherwise have been refused. All outdoor advertisements are required to comply with the 5 standard conditions imposed by the 1992 Regulations.

15. When local planning authorities are granting planning permission for development which happens to include advertisement features, they should not seek to impose conditions relating to advertisements, particularly where the condition purports to limit, or remove, the benefit of any deemed consent for the display of an advertisement granted by the Secretary of State, by virtue of the provisions of Regulation 6.

### **Advertisements in Conservation Areas**

16. Where an area is designated as a conservation area '... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area' in the exercise of any of the provisions of the Planning Acts. This includes the control of outdoor advertisements.

17. The designation of a conservation area does not, of itself, necessarily justify it being defined as an Area of Special Control of Advertisements. Many conservation areas are thriving commercial centres where the normal range of advertisements on commercial premises may be expected, provided they do not detract from visual amenity. Local planning authorities should use advertisement controls flexibly in such areas, so as to conserve or enhance particular features of architectural or historic interest.

### **Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments**

18. Almost all advertisements on listed buildings or scheduled monuments will constitute an alteration to the building or the monument and, therefore, require listed

***TCP (Control of Advertisements) Regulations, 1992, Regulation 13***

***Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 72(1) Welsh Office Circular, Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas, 1996***

***Welsh Office Circular, Planning and the Historic***

building or scheduled monument consent in addition to any advertisement consent. Special care is essential to ensure that any advertisement displayed on, or close to, a listed building or scheduled monument does not detract from the integrity of the building's design, historical character or structure, and does not spoil or compromise its setting.

***Environment:  
Historic Buildings  
and Conservation  
Areas, 1996***

***Welsh Office  
Circular, Planning  
and the Historic  
Environment:  
Archaeology and  
Planning, 1996***

### **Designated Areas and Areas of Special Control of Advertisements**

19. In National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and conservation areas, stricter controls usually apply to the display of advertisements which do not require the local planning authority's express consent. Applications for express consent also need to be closely scrutinised to ensure that the proposals do not compromise the aims of an area's designation.

20. Stricter advertisement controls apply in Areas of Special Control of Advertisements. There is a lower maximum height limit, and a smaller maximum size of letters or characters, on all advertisements displayed with deemed consent. Some classes of advertisement, in particular general poster hoardings, may not be displayed at all.

***TCP (Control of  
Advertisements)  
Regulations, 1992,  
Regulation 19***

21. Before approving an order for an Area of Special Control of Advertisement, a degree of special protection, on grounds of amenity, must be justified. The decisive consideration is whether a stricter degree of control is essential, **in addition to the local planning authority's normal powers of control (including discontinuance notices)**, to preclude the display of advertisements which would otherwise be permitted.

Designation as a conservation area, although it may not be decisive, will be a material factor: the degree of rurality of an area will also be a material factor to be taken into account. Before proposing an Area of Special Control, the local planning authority is expected to consult local trade and amenity organisations. If an order is approved, the local planning authority is required to review it at, at least, 5 yearly intervals, taking account of changes which may have occurred in the locality meantime.

***TCP (Control of  
Advertisements)  
Regulations, 1992,  
Regulation 18***

***Welsh Office  
Circular 14/92  
Town and Country  
Planning (Control  
of Advertisements)  
Regulations 1992***

### **The Secretary of State's Direction-Making Power**

22. The Secretary of State can, subject to prior consideration of any objections, make a statutory direction which effectively removes the benefit of deemed consent

***TCP (Control of  
Advertisements)  
Regulations, 1992,***

## ***Regulation 7***

provisions for any of the particular classes of advertisement specified in Schedule 3 to the 1992 Regulations (except for 3 minor exceptions) in a defined area, or a particular place, either for a limited period or indefinitely, in response to a proposal by a local planning authority. Before a direction is made, the local planning authority will have to show that it would improve visual amenity and that there is no other effective way of controlling the display of that particular Class of advertisement. As part of this process, local planning authorities will be asked to submit a fully reasoned statement showing that the particular deemed consent provisions are environmentally unsatisfactory in the area or place for which the direction is proposed: dealing with the adverse effects on visual amenity; describing the remedial steps already taken to minimise these effects; giving details of prosecutions for any illegal displays; and assessing the likely consequences of making the direction. The comments of organisations and individuals, whose interests would be affected by the making of a direction, should be sought as part of the process of deciding whether a direction is appropriate.

### **The Power to Discontinue Deemed Consent Advertisements**

23. The right to display specified classes of advertisement with deemed consent is subject to the local planning authority's discretion to issue a discontinuance notice requiring an advertisement display, or the use of an advertisement site, to stop. This discretionary power may be used only where the local planning authority consider that an advertisement, or the use of an advertisement site, is causing substantial injury to amenity or endangering public safety.

24. There is a right of appeal to the Secretary of State against a discontinuance notice. The Secretary of State will consider whether the notice is necessary to remedy a substantial injury to amenity or a danger to members of the public, and take into account any evidence that the local planning authority has acted in the light of a well-formulated advertisement control policy.

### **Operation of the Advertisement Control System**

25. Where nothing more is required than a fascia sign or free-standing signboard, it is essential that an owner or occupier can obtain a quick decision about the acceptability of proposals. This is especially important for small businesses, which need to establish their identity quickly and often cannot afford the time and resources involved in submitting a range of advertisement options for the local planning authority's assessment. The decision-making process can be speeded up by a willingness on the part of local planning authorities to delegate decisions on

***TCP (Control of Advertisements) Regulations, 1992, Regulation 8***

advertisement control matters to suitably qualified officers.

**Appeals to the Secretary of State**

26. Advertisement appeals are decided by the Secretary of State whose aim is to issue his decision on an appeal within 15 weeks of receiving it in 80% of cases.

**Cancellation**

27. The Annex to Planning Policy Guidance note 19, 'Outdoor Advertisement Control', is cancelled.

Source Division: Planning  
Date: July 2000

## *Annex A*

### **CRITERIA FOR DECIDING APPLICATIONS AND APPEALS INVOLVING POSTER-SITES**

#### **General**

A1. Any application to a local planning authority, or appeal to the Secretary of State, which involves the display of a poster is to be considered on its own merits with regard to the general characteristics of the locality in which it is to be displayed. Although other material factors may be taken into account in determining an application or appeal, the Control of Advertisements Regulations require that powers of control shall only be exercised in:

- i. the interests of amenity (which means the visual amenity of the neighbourhood where the poster is to be displayed); and
- ii. the interests of public safety (which means the safety of people using any form of travel likely to be affected by the poster display).

A2. In applying the expression 'in the interests of amenity' to any particular application or appeal, account should be taken not only of factors which may be detrimental to amenity but also of factors which may be to the advantage of the amenity of a locality, such as adding appropriate colour and interest to a drab area, or screening an eyesore.

A3. While they are to have regard to the general characteristics of a locality and they may disregard existing advertisements in the locality in assessing its general characteristics, local planning authorities should nevertheless seek to ensure consistency in their general approach towards the determination of applications in particular localities, and the Secretary of State should ensure the same approach is taken to appeals.

A4. Poster-panels should respect the scale of their surrounding location. When they are displayed on a paved forecourt, or in a pedestrianised area, their dimensions should be in scale with other street furniture and the effect of the display should not be overwhelming upon pedestrians in the area. When poster-panels are displayed on buildings, or as free-standing units alongside the highway, they should be related to the scale of surrounding buildings and have regard to the symmetry or architectural features of their location. Good quality hard or soft landscaping, properly maintained, can significantly enhance the appearance of a poster display and help it to blend with its surroundings.

#### **Open countryside**

A5. Poster advertising is out of place in the open countryside and should not normally be allowed. There may be temporary exceptions, e.g. agricultural shows and similar events, but the duration of the display should be limited to a suitable period leading up to, and the duration of, the event being advertised.



## **Villages**

A6. In villages large-scale poster advertising is normally out of place, but the smaller sizes may be appropriate, depending on the character of the village and the position of the proposed display in relation to surrounding buildings and features.

## **Residential areas**

A7. Poster advertising is out of place in any predominantly residential locality and should not normally be allowed. If a locality is in a mixed use, with shops or offices interspersed with residential development, or sharing the same premises in former dwellinghouses, some poster advertising may be acceptable when it is carefully related to the scale of surrounding buildings, and designed and positioned so as not to intrude upon or interrupt existing features or landmarks.

## **Predominantly commercial areas**

### *(i) General*

A8. In predominantly commercial surroundings, the scale of the buildings may be sufficiently large to accommodate larger poster displays without any adverse effect upon visual amenity. But the scale of commercial surroundings can vary greatly, even within short distances in the same town, and it is to be expected that decisions on applications or appeals in commercial areas will seek to match the scale of poster displays with the scale of adjacent buildings.

A9. In mixed commercial/residential areas much greater care should be taken in the siting of poster advertising than a wholly commercial area, in precisely the same way as greater care should be taken with the siting of other commercial activities.

### *(ii) On buildings*

A10. A poster panel on a building should be in scale with the building. It should not cut across any architectural features of the building unless there are exceptional circumstances, e.g. windows of a disused building awaiting redevelopment. Large-scale poster advertising will normally be inappropriate on listed buildings.

A11. Poster panels may be acceptable on the flank-walls of buildings, but they should not be unduly dominant, and should be so designed and positioned as to be seen as an integral feature of the building.

A12. In determining whether, on grounds of amenity, the display of a poster panel is appropriate on a building, the most important criterion is the overall visual effect of the display upon the entirety of the building and its surroundings. In judging this effect, the actual use of the building may matter less than the purpose for which the building was originally designed and built.

*(iii) Free-standing roadside displays*

A13. Free-standing roadside panels should always be in scale with the buildings on either side and in the surrounding area. Large poster hoardings situated at the back-edge of the pavement, or in other prominent locations, usually have a dominant visual impact upon their surroundings, and they therefore need to be sited with particular care to ensure that their effect on pedestrians is not overwhelming.

**Conservation areas**

A14. Poster advertising may be appropriate in the predominantly shopping and business parts of conservation areas though particular care, to ensure that the method of presentation of any posters displayed in a conservation area is compatible with the area's architectural or historic features, is essential. In some areas, the smaller sizes of poster panel will be more appropriate to the scale of the buildings. Similar considerations apply in areas which, though not formally designated as conservation areas, nevertheless contain buildings of considerable architectural or historic merit, or where the 'group value' of a number of buildings is outstanding.

**Open spaces and civic buildings**

A15. Poster advertising may be appropriate when seen in juxtaposition with parks and open spaces, or with civic buildings, if other forms of commercial activity, e.g. modern shop buildings, are also seen in juxtaposition with those spaces or buildings. However, where any form of commercial activity would detract from the dignity or character of the area, poster advertising would be equally inappropriate.