

Advertising Signs for Businesses



Why you may need advertisement consent

We have to make sure that advertising signs are legal. The law in this area is detailed and complex.

The main points are:

- On listed buildings, all advertising signs need consent.
- On other buildings some signs may not need consent.
- All signs must meet standard legal conditions.

Our role is to consider how signs look – especially on listed buildings and in conservation areas, to make sure they do not result in adverse safety impacts and to ensure no significant adverse impacts on amenity. We don't have any control over the message or words in advertising signs. If you are not sure about an aspect of putting up a sign or changing an existing one, please contact us sooner rather than later: we could save you time and money.

The law governing advertising signs is the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984.

The guidelines in this leaflet are also in line with the council's community safety and sustainability policies and its objectives of protecting and enhancing Fife's environment, including:

- listed buildings, conservation areas and areas of great landscape value; and
- two areas of special advertisement control, Falkland and Kingsbarns, where we restrict advertising signs.

What we Consider

Advertisements help businesses attract customers, inform them about goods and services and direct them to their premises. But they must be well-designed, displayed properly, safe, and fit in with the area they are in.

This means advertising signs must be in keeping with the character and size of the property they are to be displayed on.

When someone applies for permission to put a sign up we will carefully consider:

- the number and size of signs
- their design
- where they are put up
- the materials they are made of
- how they are hung and lit.

Advertising signs must also be:

- in keeping with where they are, for example the street, streets or surrounding landscape
- safe for pedestrians, drivers and cyclists, allowing people and vehicles to move freely around them.

Signs that are not Acceptable

These are some examples of advertising signs which would not meet our guidelines:

- Signs that obscure or conflict with legal road signs, warning signs or traffic lights.
- Signs that distract motorists' attention from their driving.
- Irresponsible fly-posting or placards.
- A-boards on road verges or that obstruct footpaths and pedestrian areas.
- Signs that are too big, finished in a way that is not appropriate for their surroundings and have bright lighting that is not needed or out of place.

We also will not give consent to proposals for too many signs in one place, for example outside a shop or in a street.

Things you need to consider

Please use these guidelines if you are planning to put up a new advertising sign or replace an existing one.

They explain what you can and cannot do and should help you develop a proposal that is best for your business and the area you are in. They cover:

- All types of signs
- Hoardings
- Free-standing signs
- Signs on bus shelters
- Advance signs (those which are away from premises and directing customer towards your business)

What we consider for all types of signs

The main factor we consider is where signs are located and how they look. If they are on a listed building or in a conservation area we will pay particular attention to details. For example, we would expect traditional features, such as wrought iron and timber rather than uPVC.

For all other signs, we will consider these factors:

- We do not want too many advertising signs in one area, jostling for attention. Sometimes we will require some of the other signs to be taken down before we will give consent for new ones to be put up.
- We want to avoid too many signs being put up on a single building or site. We would rather give consent for just one sign, or a sign that advertises more than one business (called a composite sign).

Normally we will only allow shops and similar ground floor premises that face onto the street to have one fascia sign and one projecting sign.

A fascia sign is normally above a shop window and has the name of the shop on it.

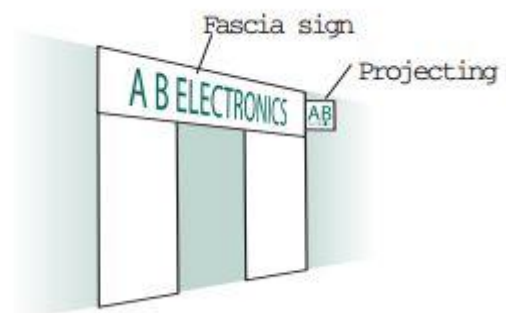
A projecting sign is often a sign that protrudes from the building or hangs at right angles to the building. Only one of these types of sign may be lit.

We may sometimes relax this guideline on the number of signs, for example if a shop is on a

corner with two sides facing onto a street, or if several units have merged to form a single larger one.

- Generally, signs should be kept as small as practically possible and should not dominate the building or area.

While advertising signs must be able to get their promotional message across, what we would consider an acceptable size for a sign will depend on where it is situated.



We do not encourage signs that are higher than fascia level, unless they look exceptional. The fascia is the strip above shop doors and windows where the shop's name is mounted. By exceptional we mean well designed and in keeping with the building.

Projecting signs should:

- not exceed 0.6m² area on each side
- not extend out more than a metre from the building
- be in line with the fascia, if possible.

Letters on advertising signs should not be too large or obtrusive and should be in keeping with the area the building's in.

We encourage business to use particular types of signs, depending on the area they are in. In some places, sign-written fascia or a more traditional sign made up of individually applied and raised letters would be most appropriate.

Letters on signs to identify premises to motorists should be clear and contain as little information as necessary.

- All advertising signs should be in keeping with the location, scale and character of the buildings they are displayed on.

Signs must not conceal or destroy any existing architectural or historic details. If your business occupies one or more adjoining buildings, you must retain the separate identity of your properties. Avoid making the buildings appear as one unit by using a single fascia.

- Choose sign colours carefully

Avoid colours that could cause anyone to confuse an advertising sign with a traffic signal or road sign. If your company has a company style for signs, must make sure the sign you propose suits the environment it is displayed in, particularly in conservation areas and on listed buildings. We will always make sure that the colours of adjacent shop-fronts complement each other.

- We prefer signs that keep illumination to a minimum.

We prefer lights that use fret cut, halo lit and similar systems. If you need advice on what these are, please call us.

We also accept concealed lighting or carefully positioned spotlights, particularly in conservation areas and on listed buildings. We generally will not accept flashing signs or animated signs.

Light intensity is measured in candelas. This table shows you what different levels of intensity we accept.

Illuminated area (square metres)	Up to 0.5	0.5-2	2-10	Over 10
Town centre shopping areas	3,500	2,500	1,750	1,000
Village and secondary shopping areas	1,750	1,300	1,000	700
Other urban areas	1,000	700	600	500
Unlit areas	700	550	450	350

We will not accept unsafe signs

We will not give consent to advertising signs that may be unsafe for pedestrians or drivers. These include advertising signs on:

- road verges and on busy roads, where they may distract motorists' attention
- pavements and in pedestrian areas, unless they are part of an agreed scheme

Projecting signs should be at least 2.5 metres from the ground.



A house style adapted to suit a conservation area



The style and scale of signs respect the building's character. The fascia is the strip on which the shop's name is displayed



We encourage the use of trade symbols

Hoardings

We will not give advertising consent to put up advertising hoardings in a residential area, in the countryside, in a conservation area or on a listed building.

Hoardings are large display boards or signs that can sometimes help to screen unsightly land or buildings in a commercial area. If they are screening unsightly land or views, they must be removed if the area is being improved.

We will take action to remove any hoardings that are not screening unsightly land or views. We will not give consent for hoardings on listed buildings or in conservation areas.

Free Standing Signs

We will give consent to free-standing signs:

- at a filling station, but with only one sign on the road outside
- at the entrance to a business from the public road, as long as it has its own vehicle access.

We will not give consent to signs:

- on or overhanging the road verge
- at junctions if they block drivers' views of the traffic.

We will accept free-standing signs in pedestrian areas and community focal points such as bus stations.

Carefully designed and located signs in pedestrian areas or other busy places such as bus stations, are often acceptable. If they are combined with, for example a kiosk or seating, and are used to give them public information, they can be very useful.

However we will not accept proposals like these in all locations, for example in a conservation area or where there are a lot of listed buildings.

Signs on Bus Shelters

We will give consent for one sign at a bus shelter in some locations. We will not give consent for signs on bus shelters in:

- areas of built heritage (areas associated with architectural, social, cultural, political, economic or military history)
- at or near road junctions or pedestrian crossings
- in areas with road safety problems.

Advance Signs

- We will not consent to advance signs located away from the business property.

These tend to be on main roads, often in obtrusive locations, or in the countryside, where vehicles travel at higher speeds. Or they may be both on a main road and in the countryside.

Businesses often argue that these signs are an effective way to direct customers to their premises, for example if they are off the beaten track and rely on passing trade. In these cases, businesses may be able to put up an official tourist brown directional sign.

If several attractions are in the same general location, we would prefer them to use one composite advertising sign.

Housing developers are able to use an official yellow and black directional sign to direct customers and visitors to housing sites under construction. We will refuse consent if we consider any sign would cause road safety problems.

Digital Signage

Digital advertising screens are a relatively new type of signage which have the potential to have a greater impact on amenity and public safety compared to more traditional forms of advertising. This is due to these screens having the capacity for moving images akin to a television combined with the greater levels of illumination typically associated with such screens.

Moving images, animations and full motion images displayed on these screens can be a distraction on safety grounds and can impact on the character and amenity of an area including on amenity levels within residential properties. As such digital signage is unlikely to be supported in residential areas. The following standards apply for internally illuminated display screens:

- a) they will only be permitted where they do not contain moving or flashing content;
- b) they must not use a slow dissolve between advertisements;
- c) the image on the screen shall have a minimum display time of 10 seconds.

In most cases Advertisement Consent will be required for digital advertising screens. Fife Council offer a [pre application service](#) through which we can confirm if Advertisement Consent is required and can provide advice on the proposal.

Where Advertisement Consent is required for digital signage, the application shall include a supporting statement confirming compliance with the standards detailed above as well as confirmation that the levels of illumination are compliant with those specified in the Professional Lighting Guide 5 Brightness of illuminated advertisements including digital displays(2023).

Enforcement Action

We work with the business community to try to get the right balance between their need to promote their businesses and our need to protect road safety and ensure advertising signs are in keeping with the surrounding area.

Enforcement action means we have powers to:

- take down unauthorised signs or make sure businesses change signs that don't meet our guidelines;
- remove fly posters;
- issue a stop notice if an advertising sign is a danger to road safety; this means the business has to remove their sign at once
- take down unauthorised placards and posters and make the business who put them up pay the cost of doing this.

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