

Sign of the times: Do you need planning permission for a sign?

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It is widely known that you may need planning permission for an extension to your house, or to add a new building to your business complex or even to put up a large wall, but did you know that you may also need permission to put up a sign?

It all depends on how large the sign is and whether it is illuminated or a simple temporary banner. Illuminated signs may need permission no matter how small they are. If you want to display an advertisement on the front of your property larger than 0.3sq metres, then you might need to apply for advertisement consent.

What if it is only temporary?

If you are putting on a local event such as a fair or street party, then you can put up a temporary sign of up to 0.6sq metres without the need for permission. Selling your house? Then make sure your estate agent's board is no bigger than 0.5sq metres. Temporary signs should only be up for a short time. If they are up for a prolonged period, then you might find yourself on the wrong end of a fine.

Complying with advertisement permission

If you are planning to erect a sign outside your place of business, then you will need to make sure it meets certain criteria. There are five 'standard conditions' that all professional advertising boards and business signs must meet:

1. It must be kept clean – if your sign starts to look dirty and tatty then you may be asked to take it down or replace it.
2. It must be in a safe condition – damaged signs pose a risk to the public, especially if they are large and

heavy. Check regularly that your sign is safe and secure, or you could end up with a visit from the [Health and Safety Executive](#) or a council representative.

3. It must have permission from the landowner to be there – this includes the [Highways Agency](#) if signage is being displayed at the side of the road on Highways Agency land.
4. It must not block, or hinder the interpretation of other signs, such as road, rail, waterway or aircraft signs, or make it hazardous to use these forms of transport within the vicinity of the sign.
5. It must be removed if the planning authority withdraws permission for the sign.

Advertising that does not need permission

Not all advertising needs permission. There are many signs that can be erected without the need for consent, including:

- advertisements on enclosed land;
- advertisements on moving vehicles;
- advertisements which are an integral part of the building's fabric;
- advertisements displayed on items such as petrol pumps or vending machines; and
- advertisements displayed inside a building.

There are still certain conditions that apply to these types of advertisements and signs, including the size of the lettering, what goods or services they advertise, and whether the sign is illuminated.

You will probably need permission for adverts on the gable ends of buildings, some fascia signs and those that project out (where the top edge is more than 4.6m above ground level).

It is usually advisable to check before you put up an advertising board, sign or even a temporary poster.

For more information, speak to commercial property solicitor, [Joseph O'Neill](#).

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Note: This is not legal advice; it is intended to provide information of general interest about current legal issues.

