

7 Non standard signs & best use of standards

Traffic signs and markings cannot be varied from a prescribed type without the authorisation of the Secretary of State. However Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 (TSRGD), offer Highway Authorities a great deal of scope in providing signs to suit sensitive environments, without the need for Department for Transport (DfT) approval. Guidance on the use of TSRGD can be found in the Traffic Sign Manual.

Sign requirements are a function of the amount of regulation needed in a street. Slow speed streets can have smaller signs with smaller lettering than would be used elsewhere on the road network.

Sections 64 and 65 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gives the Secretary of State for Transport the power to grant special authorisation for the use of traffic signs (including road markings and lines) that are not compliant with the requirements of the TSRGD. DfT are keen to retain strict control over the standard style of the signage as they want to limit any confusion

that different interpretations of a particular sign might create. Typical examples of where there might be more scope for this to occur include conservation areas or in the vicinity of sporting venues, such as football grounds, where special arrangements may apply, such as for parking on match days.

DfT are willing to consider any suggestions for new road signs but they will give regard to the ease of legibility and understanding for all modes of travel in deciding their response. Authorisations generally arise from a specific local need to vary the size of a sign, its mounting, its location or the need for illumination, and any subtle changes to the wording which might be needed. Non-standard signs must be designed so that they integrate with their surroundings whilst not compromising safety requirements.

Installing a Controlled Zone, Restricted Zone and / or 20mph Zone can take advantage of the reduced need for signing without the need for non standard signs.

General Advice

- 1 Careful review of TSRGD and the Traffic Signs Manual may identify suitable prescribed traffic signs which would eliminate the need for any authorisation from DfT.
- 2 The principal legal element of the traffic sign is the sign face itself. Its mounting and style can be changed within reason to best suit the character of its location. Alternatives which have successfully been used include; timber, stainless steel and brick or stone pillars used as gateway features into an area.
- 3 Attention is needed to ensure that signs positioned at a low height remain visible to drivers. If the sign is non standard it becomes even more important that it remains in a location where it will not be obstructed by large volumes of pedestrians passing in front.
- 4 TSRGD requires some signs to be directly lit at night where they are located in an area with street lighting.

Electroluminescent or internally illuminated signs give the best performance for this although special authorisation can be obtained for the use of super-reflectorised¹ signs that provide a reasonable level of sign brightness without the need for luminaires. For effective results, vehicles need to be using headlamps and signs positioned squarely towards oncoming vehicles. Low mounting of the signs is advisable to ensure there is the brightest illumination from the headlamp beam. Microprismatic signs have limitations compared to direct lighting and may only be appropriate in specific circumstances. An example of this can be found on Crossley Street in Halifax.

- 5 For additional information and advice regarding road signing please refer to Section 5 Traffic Management, of all *Streets for All* regional guidance documents produced by English Heritage.

¹ Electroluminescent sign faces may be suitable

Procedures

- 1 Once familiar with all the relevant guidance for traffic signs, carry out research into best practice examples, and conduct site visits of innovative approaches which have been implemented.
- 2 Carefully review whether DfT authorisation needs to be sought for the changes which are being proposed. If it is simply regarding the means of mounting of the sign then authorisation is probably not required.
- 3 Consultation with DfT can be sought regarding changes to the size, design and wording of the sign. It is mandatory that it meets the requirements laid out in the Traffic Signs Regulations. Special dispensation for non-prescribed signs needs to be applied for though it is rarely appropriate.
- 4 If an agreed design has been finalised which has to rely on non-prescribed signs, then an application should be made to DfT. Guidance on this process is available on their website.

Relevant Documents and Legislation

- Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 (TSRGD) <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2002/20023113.htm>.
- Traffic Signs (Amendments) Regulations and General Directions 2005
- Traffic Measures in Historic Town Centres, *Civic Trust/English Historic Towns Forum*, 1993
- Traffic Signs Manual, DfT *Chapter 5: Road Markings (2003) and Chapter 7: Design of Traffic Signs (2003)*
- 06/05 Traditional Direction Signs, *DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet*
- 01/03 Vehicle Activated Signs, *DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet*
- 10/97 Halifax Historic Core Zone, *DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet*²
- 01/95 Speed Limit Signs, *DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet*³
- All regional *Streets for All* guidance documents produced by English Heritage
- DfT Road Liaison Group, 2005 Well-maintained Highways, Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, TSO London
- Manual for Historic Streets *English Historic Towns Forum*, May 2008
- Traffic Management and Streetscape LTN 1/08 *Department for Transport*, March 2008

² Note that this guidance should be used with care as it pre-dates the current 2002 TSRGD.

³ *Ibid*

Supporting Case Study

Southgate, Halifax

Southgate, Halifax located in West Yorkshire provides an example where non standard signs have been successfully installed. The Halifax scheme was a Historic Core Zones project led by the English Historic Towns Forum. It involved investigating the effectiveness of traffic management schemes and how they could be designed to suit areas with special historic character. The overall Halifax improvement scheme was partially funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and Yorkshire Forward through Action Halifax.

Within the project South Yorkshire County Council and Calderdale MBC used a range of traffic control measures to effect the following;

- 1 Control of traffic movements within Halifax using 20mph zones and vehicle restrictions
- 2 Parking improvements which included increased on street parking in designed bays and the construction of a new 39 space short stay car parking facility
- 3 Pedestrian and environmental improvements, some of which included the following:
 - The creation of a pedestrian zone which is protected by automatically rising bollards, preventing unauthorised access at peak periods
 - Footway widening and improvements to crossing facilities
 - A comprehensive network of fingerpost signage
 - New tree planting.

The town centre was designated as a Restricted Zone by the use of the suitable Traffic Regulation Order. This reduced the amount of signs and markings needed within the Historic Core Zone. The signage which has been installed is specially authorised non-illuminated, highly reflective hoop signs and give information regarding traffic movement and in particular the Restricted Zone. Hooped signs are at each of the entrances. Some signs have still required illumination where their position was not suitable. Resulting effects on road traffic safety through a basic analysis of trends indicates that the number of incidents has fallen and vehicle speeds have reduced. Signs were designed to be at both car height and larger vehicle height.

Southgate has won a national award in 2002 from the British Council of Shopping Centres in recognition of the quality of the scheme within the overall town centre redevelopment.



01 Hooped signing is used to reflect the character of the area whilst maintaining safety and legibility. Photograph supplied by the English Historic Towns Forum

01



01 Caution should be taken when designing non standard signage as it could have an adverse effect on the street environment

For copies of this leaflet, or if you would like it in a different format, please contact our Customer Services quoting product code 51420. Tel: 0870 333 1181; Fax: 01793 414 926; Textphone: 01793 414878; Email: customers@english-heritage.org.uk

This is one of a series of *Streets for All Practical Case Studies*. Please refer to the overarching document *Streets for All Practical Case Studies: A Summary*, published by English Heritage March 2008. Product Code 51420, and to the nine regional *Streets for All* Volumes, published in 2005. Published by English Heritage May 2008. www.english-heritage.org.uk

Case studies researched and written by the Mouchel Group.



75% recycled
This leaflet is printed on 75% recycled paper