

# Worcestershire County Council - Interim A Boards Policy (DRAFT)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This policy establishes Worcestershire County Council's position with regard to the temporary obstruction of the public highway, including footways and verges, by advertising boards (A boards) associated with businesses and other relevant organisations. This applies to the whole county of Worcestershire.

**Note: Worcestershire County Council is currently developing a comprehensive policy and process for the licensing and management of all temporary obstructions on the public highway, including A boards. Recognising a need for clarity in the short term, this interim policy shall remain in place for A boards until the adoption of the comprehensive policy. The comprehensive policy will cover all matters in full, including details of how Worcestershire County Council will work with district, town and parish councils and other bodies to manage temporary obstructions.**

## 2. BACKGROUND

A boards are a popular way of advertising local businesses to passing members of the public. However, too many A boards in urban areas cause unsightly street clutter, impact heritage street scenes and conservation areas, and obstruct the free use of the public highway. This particularly impacts those with disabilities, parents with pushchairs, older people (both those walking and using mobility vehicles) and others with mobility impairments.

Equalities and Highways legislation require Highways Authorities to uphold the primary purpose of the public highway, to assert and protect the rights of the public to use the highway and allow equal access for all groups to move freely and without obstruction. Footway obstructions cause significant access problems for groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) and, in some instances, they may deter people from accessing local facilities.

Adopted Worcestershire County Council policy, within Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), requires public spaces and public highways (including footways) to cater for all groups, remain free of obstruction, minimise deviation to direct walking routes and be readily understood and navigated by pedestrians. This interim policy sets out how the council intends to deliver that aspect of the LTP4.

## 3. INTERIM POLICY

Obstructions of the highway are liable to enforcement but minor items not impairing public use can be tolerated (e.g. shop produce by a shop frontage). Worcestershire County Council's Interim A Boards Policy sets out guidance on how A boards can be acceptable on the highway, although the Council as the highways authority retains overriding powers, below, to deal with A boards.

A business may display **ONE** A board on the public footway, provided it meets the following requirements. At this stage, no licence or application process will apply; however it is intended this will be a requirement of the comprehensive policy, currently in development. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'business' includes all other organisations that may advertise on the Highway. The term 'A board' includes all temporary advertising materials on the Highway, including bicycles used for that purpose.

The policy shall apply to all public highway areas, including footways, verges, accesses and public areas that are on Highways land (e.g. the 'gravels' in Broadway).

- The owner of the business remains liable for the A board at all times.
- A Boards not on Highways land are not covered by this policy; however, businesses are reminded they remain liable for those A boards at all times. Where land is owned by a third party, the relevant landowner will remain responsible for management of A boards.
- The A board must be no more than 1m high and 0.75m wide.
- The A board must be placed within the frontage of the business, immediately adjacent to (i.e. touching) the front boundary of the business.
- There must be a minimum of 1.8m of unobstructed footway between the A board and any trafficked carriageway. An A board will not be acceptable if it is near to permanent street furniture, trees or other highway features, that reduce the available footway below 1.8m. A boards will not be acceptable on highway verges.
- Where multi-occupancy frontages exist, or premises are remote from the public Highway, e.g. in shopping arcades or alleyway locations, an A board will be permitted at the Highway access point. For the duration of the Interim A Boards Policy, each business will be allowed an A board in these locations, provided this does not create street clutter or cause obstruction.
- A boards must be removed from the public highway outside of the business's hours of opening.
- A boards must be freestanding, able to withstand heavy winds, and must not be attached to street furniture.
- A boards must be professionally presented, with no moving parts, attachments or protruding parts, and they must not present any hazard to highway users, for example a trip hazard, or distraction to drivers.

A boards that do not meet the above conditions may be removed, without notice, under powers granted by the Highways Act 1980.

Additionally, where an A board meets the above conditions but is considered to be causing an obstruction or nuisance to highway users, Worcestershire County Council reserves the right to remove the item(s) concerned.

Worcestershire County Council will not be responsible for storage of A boards for longer than one week after removal.

Figure 1 below provides an example of compliant A boards in Worcester.



Fig. 1 – A boards on The Cross, Worcester. Appropriately sited with enough clear pedestrian footway.

## 4. MANAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT

Management and enforcement of this policy will be undertaken by Worcestershire County Council officers. Management and enforcement will be proportionate and appropriate to the individual circumstances.

- A boards will be inspected by Worcestershire County Council officers, and owners of non-compliant A boards will be notified. These boards may be subject to removal.
- Members of the public can use the 'Report' function on the Worcestershire County Council website to draw the Council's attention to A boards that may require investigation to ensure compliance with the policy.
- The public and business communities should continue to work alongside Worcestershire County Council elected members to ensure compliance. City, Borough and District Councils, market and town centre managers, and other relevant officers should continue to work with Worcestershire County Council to manage their local areas.

- Local members should in the first instance raise concerns with their local Highways Liaison Engineer, to pursue investigation.