

Tourism Destination Traffic Signing Policy for Birmingham

Brown & White signage



Birmingham City Council
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1 Background

Purpose of the Tourism Destination Traffic Signing Policy

The policy supports the principles of the [Birmingham Transport Plan 2031](#), published in October 2021. Tourism venues must always promote sustainable modes of transport for visitors to use when accessing venues. However, it is acknowledged that private vehicle access may be required. Therefore, in these situations, tourism destination signage can be considered.

This policy is to be used by applicants who wish to apply for tourism signage in respect to their attraction/destination to complement a wider access strategy to the tourism venue. Tourism signs are used to direct motorists to tourist destinations/attractions within Birmingham, which have existing car parks dedicated to the venue.

The policy provides details of the criteria required for the attraction/destination to meet the eligibility for consideration for signage, and how to make an application.

This policy is also expected to be used by the reviewee – Birmingham City Council (BCC) to determine the suitability of the application. The policy guidance, combined with local knowledge of the area will determine whether the application is approved or not.

This policy supersedes any previous Tourism Traffic Signing Policy. This policy does not provide guidance to temporary directional signage or pedestrian wayfinding signage. Temporary directional signage that is normally associated with requests for new residential developments should be referred to the [Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016](#) (TSRGD 2016). Pedestrian signage design guidance should be referred to TSRGD 2016 and [Traffic Signs Manual 7](#).

This document does not provide guidance on costs of assessment of application or works, further information on this can be found on the BCC webpage.

2 Introduction

- 1.2 The definition of a tourist destination for tourism signs within this policy statement is as defined in the [Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 1 \(2018\)](#) and [Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 7 \(2018\)](#). *“Tourist signs should only be provided for major destinations and not for facilities used primarily by local residents.”*

In TSRGD 2016, a “tourist destination” is defined as:

- a) a Tourist Information Centre or Point;
- b) a permanently established attraction or facility (other than a leisure facility) which— i) attracts or is used by visitors to an area; ii) is open to the public without prior booking during its normal opening hours; and iii) is recognised as a tourist attraction or facility by the appropriate national promoter of tourism;

A tourist destination is a permanently established attraction or facility that is marketed as a visitor attraction to an area.

- 1.3 Eligibility under the category of tourism destinations criteria (as set out in **4.3**, **4.4** and **4.5**) does not automatically imply entitlement to signing.

One of the key criteria changes within the Tourism/Destination Traffic Signing policy for Birmingham is that only destinations that have designated off-street parking or nearby (within an approx. 5-minute walking (500m) isochrone of the tourism destination) will be considered for tourism signage.

Tourism signage is not proposed to support a wayfinding route to the endpoint of the destination, it is only used to signpost motorists driving to the car park(s) associated with the attraction.

- 1.3 For Tourism attractions/destinations that fall within the city centre A4540 ring road (The Middleway), please also refer to the City Centre Segments Signage Strategy for further guidance on how to sign the attractions/destinations on the approach to A4540 ring road (The Middleway-and to how it is signed within the respective city centre segments.

- 1.4 Any underlying principle that influences a decision to refuse an application should be referred to in the policy.

- 1.5 BCC is responsible for determining applications as the Highway Authority.

3 Principles of Traffic Signing

- 2.1 Signage should direct road users via the appropriate routes to their destinations (with available parking), safely, efficiently and with due regard to the environment. Overall, there is a need to provide clear and concise signage while seeking to reduce signage clutter.
- 2.2 The design of the sign, text height and sign positioning will be in accordance with TSRGD 2016, Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 7 (2018) and Local Transport Note (1/94).
- 2.3 Sign clutter will be reduced so that essential signs have impact, are consistent and give visitors confidence to follow the information provided. The number of supporting signposts will be kept to a minimum and will be positioned to maximise the available footway space for pedestrians.
- 2.4 Where new signs are to be installed, consideration must be given to how the new signs complement or compromise existing signs. An assessment of the existing signage and its importance should be considered, to provide a 'fair and reasonable' review of the highway signage at the location of any proposed tourism signage locations. The effects of the proposed new signs on their surroundings need to be considered in every location, and environmental impact of new signs must be minimised.
- 2.5 The number of destinations/amounts of information on the directional signs must be limited to enable drivers to take in the information safely while driving a vehicle. In the interests of safety and minimising environmental intrusion, the maximum number of tourist destinations signed on each approach to and exit from a junction should not normally exceed four on lower speed roads (with a speed limit of less than 50 mph) and three on higher speed roads (with a speed limit of 50 mph or more). The number of non-tourist signs at the location should also be taken into consideration.
- 2.6 Where more than one tourist destination is signed in advance of a junction, they should normally be incorporated together on one sign. Only in exceptional circumstances should more than one set of tourist destinations be located on any approach to a junction.
- 2.7 Retail parks, shopping centres and garden centres will not be considered for signing from the local road network using tourism signage. Instead, they should be signed as necessary for traffic management or safety reasons using standard directional signing.

4 Tourism Traffic Signing

- 3.1 BCC is responsible for determining applications for signage on local roads and is a consultee where tourism signage is proposed on trunk roads and motorways.
- 3.2 Applications for signage should be sent to the council, an expression of interest form can be found on the webpage. The council will also undertake any necessary liaison with other authorities that may need to be involved.
- 3.4 An application for a tourism sign should normally be approved in principle or refused within 6 weeks of the submitted application.
- 3.5 Consultees, e.g. Planning and Tourism Officers, should be given a response deadline of 14 days.
- 3.6 A non-returnable application fee will be charged as a contribution to administrative costs (reviewable annually as part of a review of charges).
- 3.7 Advice for applicants explaining the authority's policy and practices on Tourist Traffic Signing will be available before an application fee is taken.
- 3.8 Required evidence to complete your application is detailed in Appendix 1. If the applicant feels that their establishment/attraction should be exempt from any of these requirements, the applicant should clearly state the reasons why, and this will be considered as part of the application process.
- 3.9 If the application is successful, further costs will be charged to the applicant to cover design and installation costs, and includes a commuted sum (which allows for future maintenance/replacement of the sign(s). In future years, the commuted sum covers any costs associated with maintenance, replacement/repair as a result of damage of the sign(s).
- 3.10 Applicants should sign an agreement with the authority and payment should be made in advance.
- 3.11 Applications to be determined by officers. Appeals for unsuccessful applications can be made to elected members.
- 3.12 Signs are to remain the property of BCC, who will reserve the right to remove or relocate the sign(s) in future upon a three months' written notice period to the applicant. No compensation shall be paid by BCC to the applicant for the subsequent removal of any approved signage post-implementation.
- 3.13 On motorways and trunk roads, BCC will liaise with the National Highways, but the applicant will require a separate agreement with National Highways.
- 3.14 As a general principle, owners or operators of tourist destinations applying for tourist signs are expected to advertise their establishment, the opening times, the location, accessibility

by road and, promote sustainable travel to the establishment including public transport and active travel routes. This information is likely to be included in promotional brochures, campaigns, and other literature available through their own website and visitbirmingham.com. Applicants should provide evidence of this.

- 3.16 A tourist destination will not normally be eligible for tourist signing, unless any private advertisement signs relating to that destination are removed permanently.
- 3.17 Signing to an establishment may start from:
- Either the nearest main road, usually an 'A' or 'B' road, though in some cases the nearest 'C' class road may be more appropriate.
 - or the where the route to an establishment differs from the signed route into the nearest town.
- 3.19 Any change of venue name or venue location that requires the removal or replacement of signage will be at the applicant's full cost. This includes design, physical signage, installation costs and any additional commuted sum cost. The additional commuted sum costs would apply, if there is a net increase to the total number of signs associated with the venue, for example, the original approved application installed 3 x tourist signs, the attraction then moved to a new location that required 4 x tourist signs. The commuted sum is therefore paid on the 1 x sign). It is expected that the applicant would notify BCC of any change to the attraction's name/relocation within 6 months of the changes. BCC would aim to undertake all changes to tourism signage within 6 months from receipt of payment from the applicant.
- 3.20 BCC retains the right to alter, reposition or remove tourism sign(s):
- to accommodate another sign (if this is at the time of the application, the cost will be met by the applicant for the combined signage).
 - because the establishment (including if the establishment is closed for a period of six months or more) no longer qualifies for signs.
 - if the road network permanently alters and results in a change of traffic routing to the tourism destination.
 - to remove tourist signs with no financial compensation needing to be paid to the venue. However, BCC would engage with the venue ahead of any proposed removal of signage.
 - if it becomes known that details included in the application were falsely claimed.
- 3.21 If an attraction has existing tourism signage and now does not meet the new criteria as outlined within this policy, removal of signage should be undertaken when opportunities arise such as new signage scheme or a close by highway scheme. The applicant should be notified in writing of the proposed removal (3 months' notice) of any tourism signage. The cost of removal of existing signs could be met by the Council or venue. This would be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with any de-accrual of highway assets being captured through the Highway Change process.

5 Category of Tourism Destinations

4.1 As stated in point 1.3, the key criteria within the Tourism/Destination Traffic Signing policy for Birmingham is that only destinations that have designated off-street parking or nearby (within an approx. 5-minute walking (500m) isochrone of the tourism destination) will be considered for tourism signage.

4.2 The following three categories of Tourism Destinations shall be used to consider and determine the appropriate signage for Tourism Destinations.

4.3 **Category 'A' Regional Destinations in West Midlands** considered to be eligible, subject to (i.e. attractions with at least 250,000 visitors a year) for signing from Motorway junctions.

4.4 **Category B Local Attractions**

For the following Category B Attractions situated outside town and city centres there will be a general presumption of eligibility for signage from the surrounding "A" roads for: -

- Areas of special (non-retail) interest
- Arboreta
- Arts centres
- Art galleries
- Conference centres (other than National)
- Concert halls
- Historic and heritage properties, including historic Places of Worship
- Leisure complexes
- Other sports venues (those with under 250,000 visitors per annum)
- Monuments
- Museums
- Nature reserves
- Parks / gardens
- Theatres
- Zoos

4.5 **Category C Tourist Facilities Locations**

There will be a presumption that tourist signing to individual attractions will not be allowed for Category C locations in situations where over production of signs is considered likely. Locations likely to attract a significant number of visitors and which might otherwise be difficult for visitors to find, or where a lack of signing might have an adverse road safety implication may have to be considered as special cases. Category C in out-of-town locations will be signed only from the nearest major road.

- Camping & caravan sites
- Picnic Sites
- Tourist information Centres
- Youth Hostels

6 Gateway/Boundary signage

- 5.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) now permits greater flexibility on the design of boundary signs. These have been introduced to enable authorities to foster a sense of place, and the historic and geographic qualities often associated with particular areas. Boundary signs indicate the name of a city, town, village, or an administrative area immediately ahead, together with phrase and image that is representative of the city, town, village or area. The sign may incorporate photographic or other images showing an item of local interest.
- 5.2 Refer to [TSRGD 2016](#) and [Traffic Signs Manual 1 \(2018\)](#) for further information to the guidance and regulations that need to comply with boundary signage.
- 5.3 Any proposed gateway/boundary signage proposals will be led by BCC.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Application for tourism signage*

Please check the criteria before applying, this may save you time, effort and money.

Tourism signs are installed to assist in directing visitors travelling on the local road network to a tourist destination, they are not for advertising purposes (the text and symbols permitted on the signage are limited to those approved within TSRGD 2016). Under the 2024 Tourism Destination Traffic Signing Policy for Birmingham, signage applications for Public houses, restaurants, hotels, individual shops and places of worship are unlikely to be approved.

Eligibility for signs does not imply a right to signs. It may be necessary to turn down a request for a sign at a given location because of siting difficulties or where the number of destinations signed at a junction would be excessive.

Criteria for consideration of tourism signs:

Please provide proof of the following:

1. Your establishment has sufficient off-street visitor car parking facilities associated (excluding staff parking) with the attraction or a nearby public car park within 500 metres of the establishment.
2. Your establishment is a tourism attraction that is frequented by tourists - a significant number of visitors to the establishment (it is suggested at least 40%) are from outside the area (more than 15 miles away). If the number is unknown, the owner of the establishment must carry out a survey of users to determine what proportion of visitors are coming from outside the 15-mile area and what problems are encountered in finding the site.
3. Provide confirmation that it is a quality tourist facility from the English Tourist Board, a Local Authority Tourism Department or any other body recognised by the City Council as representing standards in the particular field of tourism.
4. That you have an existing website with a map, written directions and postcode information to assist Sat-Nav users. (Provide link to website page and your entry on visitbirmingham.com) and that the website includes up to date information on reaching the venue by more sustainable modes of transport, including latest public transport information and any active travel provisions such as cycle parking facilities.
5. Evidence that your establishment is open at least four hours a day for at least 150 days per year, excluding Bank Holidays and open to people making casual visits. (noting that tourism signage will not be provided where admittance is by prior appointment only).
6. Details of your opening hours.

In addition to the listed proof items, please provide:

A digital map (a scanned plan will suffice) showing:

1. Showing the location of your premises and associated car parking (including number of spaces
2. Details of the requested locations for new or updated tourism signs you wish to be considered.

*If you are applying for signage on the motorway in addition to local signage you will need to apply to Highways England who manage the motorway network.

[Apply for brown tourist signs on roads that Highways England manage.](#)