



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
HAMPSHIRE

CPRE HAMPSHIRE

PRINCIPLES FOR ROAD SIGNAGE IN RURAL AREAS

- Hampshire County Council has no legal duty to warn drivers of hazards on the road (House of Lords decision), but extensive use of safety signage on a voluntary basis can raise a legitimate expectation that all hazards will be marked, and the leave the highway authority exposed legally if a hazard is not marked or a safety sign is missing.
- Reduction of accidents causing fatalities and serious injuries is an important objective and a proactive view should be taken, but the long-term benefit of heavy and strident signage in achieving this remains unproven and is disbelieved by many - particularly as to accidents involving local residents, who tend not to see the signs after some initial impact.
- New guidelines for signage of all types on rural roads, and for traffic management schemes in villages, should be developed and negotiated with the DfT where there is any conflict with DfT prescribed rules for traffic signs.
- Local people should be involved in the development of schemes involving signage, both because they often have local knowledge that can be helpful, and in order to obtain as high a degree of consensus as possible as to the need for, and layout of, the signage.
- Small engineering works, or planting schemes, in character with the rural nature of the road, are to be preferred to new signage and white lining and, by altering the appearance of the road, are likely to have more influence on driver behaviour. Stopping up of dangerous small junctions may be appropriate where there is alternative access.
- In villages a change of driving environment should be indicated by the road surface, such as by way of surface dressing in a lighter colour. Signage can correspondingly be minimised, and redesigned so as to be more appropriate to the character of the village. Traditional style signs should be used in villages wherever possible.
- On an open road in the countryside, both the possible safety benefits of signage and its impact on the character of the rural road and its wider landscape impact need to be considered together in an integrated fashion. The most strident signage should be reserved for spots with the worst safety record. (HCC has strong policies in favour of conserving and enhancing landscape and the character of rural roads)
- Safety signs that do not influence driver behaviour, or only marginally, need to be questioned as to their real safety benefit, because as well as adding to clutter they can distract drivers from the road and so actually reduce safety. (eg animals crossing, falling rocks, farm traffic etc)

- Signage should be designed for the ordinary road user, and not for reckless users whose inconsiderate behaviour (in terms of noise in the countryside as well as danger and intimidation on the road) needs to be viewed as Anti-Social Behaviour. The only real remedy for this dangerous activity is enforcement, enforcement, and enforcement. However, engineering design, such as markings on the road and use of surface dressing, can be used to encourage more socially responsible motoring.
- It is the cumulative effect of all types of signage that affects the character of the road, not just safety signage. A plethora of signs also distracts drivers from the road and from the safety signs. Taking a “whole route” or “whole village” approach will allow cumulative impact on the character of the route to be considered, and a consistent approach to signage adopted along the whole route.
- Removing unnecessary and duplicative signs, reducing the size or improving the design of others, and replacing damaged signs, will improve the rural character and appearance of the road and at the same time allow needed safety signs to have a higher impact on the road user. A win-win outcome.
- Unapproved commercial and advertising signage should be enforced against as it adds to the cumulative impact of signage with no safety advantage. Indeed drivers are likely to be distracted by it, thereby decreasing road safety.
- Signs should only be yellow backed in places where there is a clear justification in safety terms (and the justification should be a demanding one), otherwise whatever additional influence such signs may have on driver behaviour will be lost by overuse. Entrance to villages should be indicated by discreet signage, incorporating traditional village name signs, and not by large yellow backed signs.
- Where bollards are used at junctions they must be of appropriate design. Bright fluorescent bollards are not appropriate in the countryside.
- When an increase in alertness of the driver is needed, road markings alone (eg SLOW) should be preferred to a road sign. The fact that an explanatory sign does not accompany such a warning only increases the uncertainty for the driver, and so alertness. This has been a traditional method of giving a warning on rural roads for many years and is well understood by drivers.
- Roadside markers and chevrons adversely affect the rural character of the road and are prone to damage and deterioration with time which that makes that impact worse. They should only be used in places where there is a bend or other obstruction which is out of character with the basic nature of the particular road, otherwise whatever additional influence such markers may have on driver behaviour will be lost by overuse. Drivers must be expected to adjust their speed and behaviour to the nature of the road they are driving on without safety signage. (Timber roadside markers have less adverse visual impact in rural areas than plastic)
- Edge white lining should not be used on even important county roads as it tends to increase the speed of drivers, and confers little (if any) safety benefit. The few occasions of fog are not a justification for its use. Entrances off the road may be highlighted by broken edge lining.

- White lining should not be used at all on the lesser rural roads, as white lines give the appearance of a dedicated space for the driver on his/her side of the road (which can be illusory if a large vehicle comes the other way), and so tend to make the driver go faster
- Where there are alternative sites for a sign, the least sensitive in terms of landscape and clutter should be chosen
- Where more than one sign is needed, they should be positioned as best to display them effectively, and yet minimise clutter impact. Signs should share posts / boards wherever possible (but traditional fingerposts should not have other signs attached to them, or modern signs in close vicinity)
- Illuminated bollards have a very severe impact on rural character and are to be avoided
- Wherever possible, signs should not be placed against a clear horizon as this only maximises their adverse impact on the character of the road, and especially when approaching the blank side. On east / west routes such signs may not be visible against the sun at sunrise and sunset.
- Empty posts are an indication that whatever sign was on it is not being missed, and are a safety hazard in their own right. All empty posts should be removed.
- Signs should be as small as possible, consistent with achieving their purpose. (Many tourist, brown, signs are much bigger than they need be, and distract from safety or directional signs in their vicinity)
- Wherever possible, signs should not obstruct verges, as horse riders and walkers wishing to avoid use of the carriageway can use the verges as a refuge. Obstruction of verges also makes the cutting of verges more difficult, and so more expensive.
- Wherever possible, signs should not be placed in hedgerows, as they become obscured by vegetation and obstruct hedge trimming.
- Modern directional signs should be replaced by traditional fingerposts, wherever possible. Directional signs should only contain essential destinations, and so be reduced in size.
- Simple width / height restriction signs may be less intrusive than large “no HGV” type signs at the entrance to rural lanes.