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Section 13: Signs

13.1 Introduction

Signs are erected for a range of purposes, such as specific identification of any site or building, providing directions or information, or for promoting goods, services or forthcoming events. Signs controlled by the District Plan are those which are visible from any public place or thoroughfare. Signs may consist of a specially constructed device, structure, erection or apparatus, or may be painted, written, printed, carved, embossed, inscribed, projected onto, placed or otherwise fixed to or upon any site, wall, hoarding, pole, fence, rock, stone, tree, stationary vehicle or structure of any kind whatsoever. Signs behind or in windows and window displays are not considered to be signs for the purposes of the District Plan and are therefore not controlled by any provisions in this section.

Signs are essential throughout the District for the information they provide and their indirect contribution to its economic viability. However, there is the possibility that signs may have adverse environmental effects, particularly on visual amenity, and may conflict with traffic and pedestrian safety in the District.

The standard of visual amenity varies between different parts of the District, and is generally defined by the range and nature of land uses in an area. Those areas which are perceived as having a consistent and uncluttered visual amenity, such as the residential or rural areas of the District, are more susceptible to the potential adverse effects of signage. In contrast, in areas where the visual amenity is more diverse, such as commercial or industrial areas, the potential adverse effects of signs are limited by the existing mix of visual amenity. In addition, different areas of the District have variable needs for signs. In commercial and industrial areas signs are necessary and accepted features, as they attract customers to the business, and allow the easy identification of a site. Because of the range in needs and the visual sensitivity of different parts of the District, consideration needs to be given to different standards for signs in different areas.

Careful consideration also needs to be given to the potential adverse effects of signs on traffic and pedestrian safety. Signs have the ability to obstruct drivers' vision, cause driver confusion, or to encourage drivers to take unsafe actions. In addition the health and safety of pedestrians and other road users needs to be given due consideration.

13.2 Issues

13.2.1 The Display of Signs can result in Adverse Effects on the Environment and Traffic Safety

The need for signs in the District is essential to allow people to provide for their wellbeing, as signs are used to provide information for a wide range of social, economic and cultural purposes. Additional to commercial purposes, there is a need for traffic and directional signs that are regulatory in nature, to provide direction to the public for safety reasons. However, in order to protect people's health, safety and well-being, some controls on signs are required. The Council is also required to avoid, remedy, or mitigate any potential adverse effects on the environment which

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may arise from the use of signs in the District. The most significant potential adverse effects of signage are on traffic safety, and visual amenity. The impact of a sign on the visual amenity of an area will be influenced by the location, size or level of illumination of the sign and how these features conform to the characteristics of the surrounding environment and people's expectations.

A sign located on a site, advertising a service or event on another site is known as an off-site sign and has the potential to create the same adverse effects as any other type of general advertising sign. Off-site signs are also often located along major routes into the District's towns advertising services and commercial activities in the town centre. Such signs can create adverse visual effects through the clustering of signs, and a traffic hazard.

In particular, from a traffic safety viewpoint, careful consideration needs to be given to advertising along State Highways and major arterial routes, where the potential for conflicts with traffic safety are highest. The potential adverse effects of signs on traffic safety include:

- distraction of drivers' attention due to inappropriateness of the location, design, size, or type of sign;
- poor location or design of sign causing impulsive driver action, such as taking evasive action, stopping or sudden turning movements without giving adequate warning signals.

All signage situated within a State Highway corridor is subject to the controls specified in the New Zealand Transport Agency Bylaw 1987/3. State Highways and roads are designated for their transportation purpose, therefore all activities, including signs, for State Highway or road purposes are permitted as an integral part of the road designation. Any other activities which are proposed to be undertaken within road reserve (State Highway or other roads), including signs, require the approval of the designating authority, either New Zealand Transport Agency in the case of State Highways or the Council for other roads. Signs within a State Highway or road will also be subject to the standards of the most sensitive zone. The Council also controls "sandwich board signs" on road reserves within the towns by way of a Bylaw and considers it appropriate to continue to do so in the interests of public safety and convenience, and to avoid excessive clutter.

The need for controls on signs in the District is also important to ensure that the potential visual effects of signs do not adversely affect the amenity of the District. Because of their different characteristics including residential occupation, residential and rural areas are more susceptible than commercial and industrial areas to the potential impacts of signs. Therefore different forms of control are required to maintain and enhance the visual amenities of different areas.

13.3 Objective and Policies

Objective 13.1: Effects of Signs

To provide for signs which convey necessary information, while avoiding or mitigating any adverse effects on public safety, convenience or visual amenity in the District.

Policy 13.1A

Avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the character, attractive appearance and visual amenity of the different areas of the District in accordance with the community's expectations, by limiting the number, size, location and nature of signs in different areas of the District.

Policy 13.1B

Ensure that the display of signs does not adversely affect traffic safety by causing physical obstruction, confusion or distraction to, or obstruction of views, for motorists or pedestrians or other road users.

Policy 13.1C

Limit signs in or over public places or attached to utilities, community facilities or public reserves to signs necessary for direction, public information or public safety.

Policy 13.1D

To encourage the consolidation of information signs, by supporting the establishment of "welcome to" signs, and information laybys, at the entrance to the District's larger settlements, and at sites of natural or historical interest, in order to reduce the effects of directional and commercial signs on visual amenity and traffic safety.

Explanation and Reasons

Signs provide information and can add vibrancy to places; however it is desirable to limit signs throughout the District only to the extent that this is compatible with public safety, convenience and the maintenance and enhancement of amenity in certain areas. In particular the amenity of areas with a predominantly residential or rural or natural character can be compromised by a clutter of signs or signs of an inappropriate character. This is especially relevant for off-site signs along major routes into the District's towns which can create adverse visual amenity effects as well as a hazard to motorists in terms of being a distraction. It is appropriate to control such effects through the use of standards in the District Plan.

13.4 Anticipated Environmental Results

- Adequate signage to convey the information necessary for the social, economic and cultural welfare of the community.
- Minimal adverse effects of signs on traffic and pedestrian safety.
- Maintenance and enhancement of the visual amenity of the residential and rural areas of the District.

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- Signs do not compromise existing amenity values of the zone and location in which they are erected.

13.5 Methods of Implementation

Through the District Plan

- The provision of rules to control the location, number and size of advertising signs in all zones.
- The exercise of control as owner and designating authority for all roads in the District, other than State Highways.

Through the bylaw

- The implementation of the Council's Bylaw relating to the display of signs on roads and footpaths.

Through the LTP

- Through the LTP, as resources are available, to support the establishment of information signs for the District's larger settlements and for sites of historical and natural interest.

13.6 Reasons for Rules

To meet the Council's objectives relating to signs, the method of stating permitted and discretionary forms of signage is considered the most appropriate and effective to mitigate the potential adverse effects of signs in the District.

Those types of signs which are generally accepted as essential for the provision of information throughout the District have been listed as permitted activities with some restrictions on size and location. This allows certainty throughout the District as to what signage is permitted for different activities.

Forms of signage which are considered to be undesirable because of their potential to cause distraction to drivers, and thus adversely affect traffic safety are considered as discretionary activities in the District. Other types of signage have been listed as discretionary and non-complying activities because of their potential adverse effect on visual amenity, public health and safety and public convenience. This enables Council to consider their suitability with respect to matters of traffic safety, visual amenity, and, in the case of non-complying activities, the objectives and policies of the plan.

It is also intended to limit signs for home occupations to the identification of the property name and/or number, and the name of the business, and not the advertisement of products and services.

Advertising at the boundary of the Business E zone (Ashburton Business Estate) and the buffer separating this zone from the adjoining Residential D Zone is considered to adversely affect the

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outlook, amenity and landscape values of the buffer and the Residential D Zone and therefore is strictly controlled.

13.7 Rules – Signs

No person shall commence or continue any activity which is a Controlled, Discretionary or Non-Complying Activity in terms of this District Plan, without first having obtained resource consent in terms of the Act.

13.7.1 Permitted Activities

Except where specifically provided for as Restricted Discretionary or Non-Complying activities, the erection of all signs shall be Permitted Activities in all zones, subject to compliance with the General Standards and Site Standards below and all relevant District Wide rules.

Traffic signs on Council roads, New Zealand Transport Agency signs on State Highways, signs approved by the Council as Roading Authority or signs approved under the NZTA bylaw 1987/3 or New Zealand Transport Agency signs approved for service and tourism activities; including signs denoting the name of a street or the street number of premises; or signs providing onsite traffic directions for an activity, where the signs are visible from a public place such as a park, reserve or road.

13.7.2 Restricted Discretionary Activities

Except where specifically provided for as Non-Complying activities, the erection of the following signs are Restricted Discretionary Activities, with the exercise of the Council's discretion being restricted to the matter(s) specified in the Assessment Matters in 13.10:

- a) Any sign not listed as a Non-Complying Activity which does not comply with any one or more of the General Standards and/or the Site Standards.
- b) The following signs in the Business Zone and in the Commercial Area of the Aquatic Park Zone, in relation to their effect on traffic safety:
 - flashing signs with lights or illumination which flashes, moves, rotates, varies in intensity, colour or size, and all other advertising devices of this nature;
 - moving signs which visibly move, revolve, rotate, create an optical illusion of movement, or change colour, whether by electrical or other means, and all other advertising devices of this nature.

13.7.3 Non-Complying Activities

Erection of the following signs is a Non-Complying Activity:

- a) Signs affixed to vehicles or trailers, and parked in a public place, road, public property or private property so as to be visible from a public place. This does not apply to advertising painted, or attached directly, onto vehicles or trailers and incidental to the primary use of that vehicle or trailer.

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- b) The following signs in the Residential, Rural and Open Space Zones and the Residential Area of the Aquatic Park Zone:
- flashing signs with lights or illumination which flashes, moves, rotates, varies in intensity, colour or size, and all other advertising devices of this nature;
 - moving signs which visibly move, revolve, rotate, create an optical illusion of movement, or change colour, whether by electrical or other means, and all other advertising devices of this nature.
- c) Signs not related to the identification of properties and home occupations in the Residential and Rural Zones. (Note: this includes any sign not related to the site on which it is erected.)
- d) In Area 1 of the Business E Zone (Ashburton Business Estate only), any signs, including those on the walls of buildings, directly adjoining or facing the buffer, as shown on 5-2 the Outline Development Plan for the Business Estate, separating the Business Estate and Residential D Zone.

13.7.4 Notification / Consultation / Notes

Resource consents in relation to the following matters shall not be publicly notified:

Temporary Signs	Site Standard 13.9.1
For Sale Signs	Site Standard 13.9.4

Consultation with New Zealand Transport Agency will be important in the assessment of resource consent applications in relation to the following standards:

Any sign within any State Highway

Notes:

- District-Wide Rules may also apply in addition to any relevant Sign Rules. If any one or more of the District-Wide Rules apply, the activity may require consent in respect of those rules.
- An application for a directional traffic sign on roads owned by the Council or New Zealand Transport Agency must be made in writing to the relevant authority and will be processed in accordance with the policies and by-laws of that authority.
- For the purposes of measuring the area of any sign, a double-sided sign shall be measured as the area of one side only, being the largest of any one side.
- For the purpose of these rules, the definition of sign excludes any advertising device situated internally within a building or within the window of a premise (refer to Definitions Section).

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13.8 General Standards

- a) All signs shall relate to or be associated with services, products or events available or occurring on the site on which the sign is located, except where specifically provided for as a permitted activity for a temporary sign or traffic sign.
- b) All signs shall comply with the height, and where applicable recession plane requirements for the zone in which they are located, but shall not be required to comply with rules relating to setbacks from road boundaries in each of the respective zones.
- c) All signs attached to buildings shall not exceed the highest point of the roof.
- d) No sign shall be attached to a tree, other than a sign identifying the species of tree and/or its classification in terms of the District Plan.
- e) No sign shall be erected on or adjacent to a road which will:
 - obstruct the line of sight of any corner, bend, intersection or vehicle crossing;
 - obstruct, obscure or impair the view of any traffic sign or signal;
 - physically obstruct or impede traffic or pedestrians;
 - resemble or be likely to be confused with any traffic sign or signal;
 - use reflective materials that may interfere with a road user's vision;
 - use flashing or revolving lights;
 - project light onto the road so as to cause a hazard or distraction to users of the road (including pedestrians).
- f) The minimum lettering sizes in Table 13-1 below shall apply to all signs located within 10 horizontal metres of a road:

Table 13-1: Minimum Lettering Sizes

Regulatory Speed Limit (km/h) of Adjoining Road	Minimum Lettering Height (mm)		
	Main Message	Name of Occupier/Property	Secondary Message
0-50	150	100	75
51-70	200	150	100
71-80	250	175	125
81-100	300	200	150

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13.9 Site Standards

13.9.1 Temporary Signs

- a) Temporary signs for community, educational, election campaign, or recreational events and during building construction shall have a maximum area of 5m² and be limited to one per site.
- b) Temporary signs shall not be erected more than six months prior to the date of the commencement of the activity advertised nor remain erected more than one week following completion of that activity.

Note: This activity is not subject to any other site standard.

13.9.2 Signs in connection with and on the same site as any utility, community facility, conservation area, recreational track or public reserve

- a) Signs in connection with, and on the same site as any utility (except Transmission Line Support Structures), community facility, conservation area, recreational track or public reserve shall:
 - be a maximum 1m² in area where signs are visible from any public road, public reserve or adjoining property except that:
 - in any Rural or Open Space Zones, where signs are visible from any public road, other public reserve, or adjoining property, signs shall be a maximum of 3m² in area.
 - be limited to those necessary for giving direction, identifying the site/facility, identifying a utility operator, displaying public information or assisting public safety;
 - be separated by a minimum of 100 metres, where the signs are located on any one site

Note: This activity is not subject to any other site standard.

13.9.3 Signs on Transmission Line Support Structures

- a) Signs on a transmission line support structure intended to identify the structure or its owner must cover an area of not more than 1m².
- b) Signs on a transmission line support structure that are intended to help with safety or navigation must cover an area of no more than 6m².

Note: This activity is not subject to any other site standard.

13.9.4 For Sale Signs

- a) Signs advertising that a property is for sale shall be a maximum 2m² in area.
- b) Signs shall be located on the property which is for sale.

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- c) For Sale signs shall be removed within two weeks of a property no longer being offered for sale.

Note: This activity is not subject to any other site standard.

13.9.5 Advertising Blimps or Balloons

- a) Advertising blimps or balloons shall not be flown:
- more than 40m above the ground;
 - within a 5 kilometre radius of any landing strip or aerodrome or airport;
 - outside daylight hours;
 - when wind speeds exceed 15 knots;
 - from, above or immediately adjacent to any arterial road;
 - from, above any road, public place, heritage building or site, or Residential, Open Space Zones, Aquatic Park or Rural Zone;
 - if they display more than 5m² of sign area.
- b) Advertising blimps or balloons shall be flown with at least two guy-ropes attached so that in the event of one rope breaking the remaining rope shall adequately restrain the blimp or balloon.

Note: This activity is not subject to any other site standard.

13.9.6 All Business Zones and Commercial Area of the Aquatic Park Zone

13.9.6.1 Location of Signs

- a) All signs (excluding sandwich boards) shall be a minimum of:
- 2.5 metres above a footpath; and
 - 0.5m setback from the kerb of a road or road boundary.

except where the sign is attached for its full length and width to the façade of a building. Veranda fascia signs shall not exceed 900mm in height. See Figure 13- below.

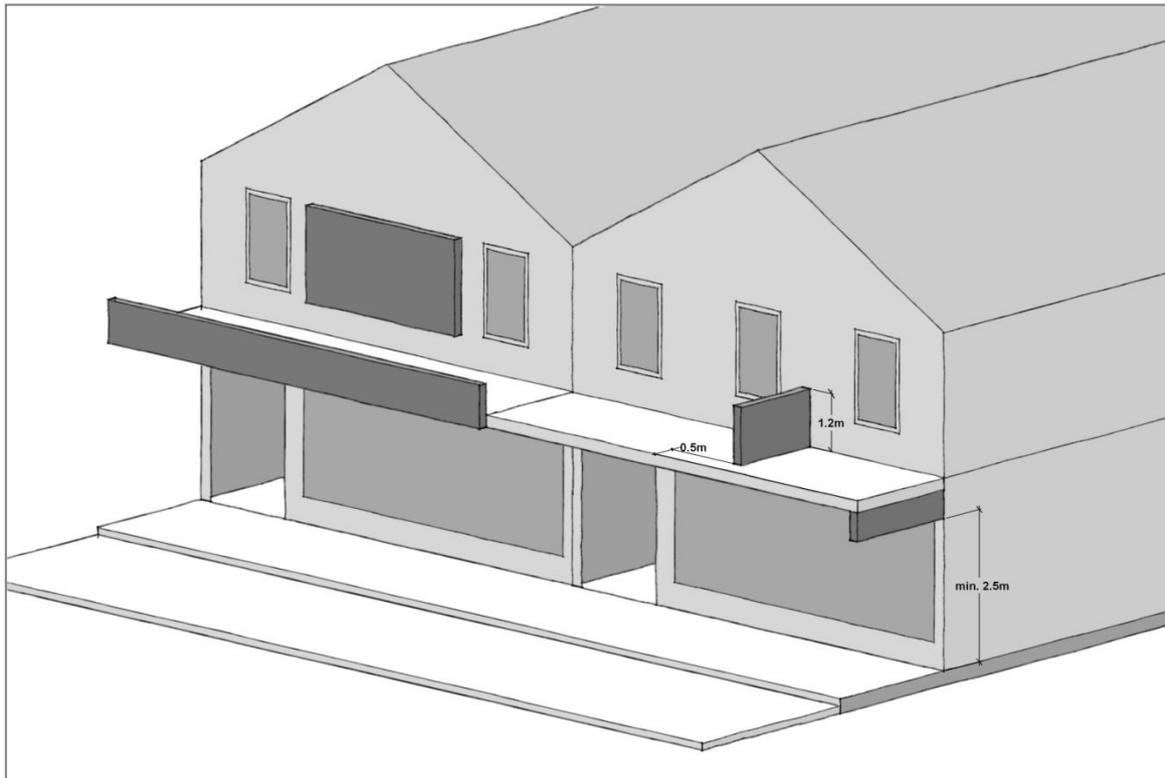


Figure 13-1: Veranda Signage

13.9.6.2 Signs Attached To Verandas

- a) Under veranda signs shall be no closer than 1.5m from any other under veranda sign.
- b) Signs above verandas but attached to the veranda (excl. veranda fascia signs) shall not exceed 1.2m in height above the top of the veranda or not extend beyond the profile and height of the building, whichever is less, and shall be setback at least 500mm from the fascia line.

13.9.7 Signs in the Business E Zone

- a) In the Business E Zone at Ashburton Business Estate as shown on the Outline Development Plan in Appendix 5-2B, the following shall apply:
 - All signs visible within 50m from the boundary of the buffer, as defined on for the Business E Zone, shall be finished in colours from the following colour palette range:

BS 00A13, BS 4-050, BS 12B23, BS 12B21, BS 12B19, BS 10B23, BS 10B19, BS 16A07, BS 18B19, BS 10A05

13.9.8 Rural, Residential and Open Space Zones and in the Residential and Recreational areas of the Aquatic Park Zone

13.9.8.1 Number of Signs

- a) Signs shall be limited to a single sign for each road frontage of any site.

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13.9.8.2 Size of Signs

- a) The maximum area of any sign shall be:

Table 13-2: Maximum Sign Areas

Zone	Area of sign
Residential (other than Residential D Zone), and Open Space Zones and in the Residential and Recreational Areas of the Aquatic Park Zone	0.5m ²
Rural and Residential D Zones	2m ²

13.9.8.3 Location of Signs

- a) Signs shall be placed no more than 3 metres above ground level or so that no part of the sign is higher than the eaves of a building to which they relate, whichever is the lesser.
- b) In Rural Zones, the sign shall be visible from the distances set out in Table 13-3 below:

Table 13-3: Visibility Distances

Regulatory Speed Limit (km/hr)	Visibility Distance (m)
0-50	80
51-70	130
71-100	250

- c) In Rural Zones the minimum distance between successive signs, as read from the one direction and measured parallel to the centre-line of the road, shall be as shown in the Table 13-4 below:

Table 13-4: Minimum Distance Between Signs

Regulatory Speed Limit (km/hr)	Separation Distance (m)
0-70	60
71-80	70
81-100	80

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- d) For signs located on sites within rural zones and where the sign is visible from a State Highway, the sign's message must be limited to a maximum of five words or a combination of words and symbols to be not more than six.

(Note: the lettering size controls contained in the General Standards.)

13.9.8.4 Illumination of signs

- a) No sign shall be illuminated by any method whatsoever, such that its illumination casts light or reflected light on to any other property or road.
- b) Signs visible from an arterial road in a 100km/hr legal road speed area shall not be illuminated unless the premises are open for business.

Note: the lighting controls also contained in the General Standards.

13.10 Assessment Matters

13.10.1 Visual Amenity

- a) The extent to which the sign will have any adverse effects on the visual amenities and character of the locality, site or structure to which the sign will be attached.
- b) The need for any extra signage in addition to the permitted signage for the zone.
- c) Any likely cumulative effects of allowing the sign to be erected.
- d) The need to impose conditions relating to the location, design and appearance of the sign and the period for which it may be erected, or operated.

13.10.2 Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

- a) The extent to which the sign may cause an obstruction to driving sight distances, traffic signs or signals, or unnecessarily intrude into a drivers field of vision or physically obstruct vehicles or pedestrians, or cause a distraction that affects safety for road users.
- b) The potential adverse effects of the proposed sign on drivers' concentration under all possible weather conditions.
- c) The potential adverse effect of the sign on drivers who may have medical conditions or impairments which may reduce or affect safety.
- d) The extent that any sign resembles a traffic control sign, warning device, or signal, or may make a traffic control sign or signal difficult to discern, with respect to both colour and shape, when considered from all possible driving angles. This includes signs which:
- provide a confusing or dominating background, which could reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal;

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- invite drivers to turn, but are sited in such proximity to the vehicle entrance that there is no time to signal, slow down and turn safely;
 - contain reflectors or flashing lights and therefore have the potential to be confused with traffic control signs or signals at night.
- e) Proximity to other signs and intersections and potential adverse effects on the safety of road users including pedestrians
- f) The effect on driver safety and concentration as a result of reduced lettering sizes or more than the permitted number of words and symbols, or the nature of the text, lettering, and fonts, etc that make interpretation of the sign difficult while driving.

13.10.3 Signs Attached To Trees

- a) The nature/type of sign.
- b) How the sign will be attached to the tree.
- c) What materials will be used to attach the sign.
- d) Whether the sign is temporary or permanent.
- e) Any potential to restrict the growth or otherwise detract from the health of the tree.