

Class 3f ~ On-premises business signs in urban areas

Class 3(k) ~ On-premises business signs in the current SAMOAC (April 1998) makes provision for signs in both urban and non-urban environments. In order to obtain a more user-friendly version of SAMOAC Class 3f in the Draft Revised SAMOAC (July 2008) is now limited to on-premises business signs in urban areas while signs indicating farming practices have now been moved to a new sign class, namely Class 3l ~ Signs for Agricultural and Related Land Use in Rural and Natural Areas.

On-premises business signs in urban areas may include the following sign mediums or structural types:

- Individual free-standing signs
- Combination or stack signs
- Signs on entrance gates and walls
- Banners and flags indicating the name and nature of an enterprise or advertising products sold at such an enterprise.
- Product replicas and 3D signs indicating products sold on specific premises.

(For combination or stack signs at filling stations and roadside service areas see Class 4a).

It should be noticed that being a free-standing sign in most cases on-premises business signs have a tendency to encroach onto roadways which may lead to severe sign proliferation and traffic safety problems and may impede pedestrian movement on sidewalks. On-premises business signs should therefore not be allowed for each and every enterprise supplementary to other signs by which such an enterprise may be identified. Class 3f signs are provided for a specific reason and shall only be allowed in cases:

- Where a building housing an enterprise is situated too far back for any sign to be legible from the road.
- Where it is not structural possible or visually feasible to affix any sign to a specific building.
- Where it is not structural possible or visually feasible to affix signs representing all enterprises in a shopping centre to the building(s) of such a shopping centre.
- Where a sign is needed to indicate the entrance or access road to an enterprise or shopping centre.
- Where a stack sign may prevent the proliferation of signs or the untidy appearance of signs.

Special care should be taken with regard to on-premises business signs at shopping centres. A too lenient sign policy at shopping centres will only result in sign proliferations of major proportions with free-standing signs of each and every enterprise trying to become bigger, brighter, taller and more numerous than those of

all other enterprises. The visual problem may be solved to a certain extent by incorporating individual on-premises business signs into stack signs, but as soon as the enterprises in a shopping centre needing a panel on a stack sign exceeds a certain number the required dimensions of the stack sign will impact on the visual environment in its own special way. There may also be a tendency for individual panels on a stack sign to compete with one another in terms of size, position and colour thereby increasing the potential impact of stack signs. By displaying a large amount of information in a concentrated format stack signs may also reveal a tendency to impact on traffic safety. The degree of impact will again be proportional to the number of enterprises to be represented on a stack sign.

A holistic approach to shopping centre signs and advertisements by means of a SEA approach may be the only way to solve the above-mentioned problems. The following principles may be relevant to such an approach:

- All sign types relevant to shopping centres should be considered together in allocating sign opportunities. For instance where too many enterprises are at stake signs may have to be limited to one each per enterprise whether it be a wall sign, roof sign or a panel on a stack sign.
- The playing field should be levelled. Each and every enterprise in a shopping centre should be presented with more or less the same opportunity for sign display in terms of sign size, position, illumination, etc. The only exception may be the anchor facilities or main attractions to a shopping centre such as major chain stores. In order to create a festive atmosphere a repetition of flags or banners may also be used to indicate such key facilities. Alternatively the size of retail space occupied may be used as an acceptable criterion for allocating sign space.
- Where the number of enterprises are too numerous to allocate at least one sign per enterprise the problem may be solved by alternating sign displays on a stack sign structure in order to cover all enterprises in a shopping centre within a specific time period.
- Where better sign prominence is required a sign structure displaying larger panels may be erected in addition to the main stack sign in order to advertise all the enterprises in a shopping centre more prominently on a rotational basis.

Smallholdings, whether urban or rural, pose a serious problem in most cases. These areas are normally smothered by a large number of shoddy signs indicating the names of landowners and a hodgepodge of activities and enterprises struggling to survive. A more ordered approach such as stack signs may be needed to rectify this problem.



Two on-premises business signs trying to ambush passing motorists (top). The *Dairy Select* sign is almost overwhelming the brick-face building to which it belongs. A wall sign of moderate proportions would have been more than adequate for indicating this enterprise.

On-premises signs in the form of banners encroaching onto the street and hampering pedestrian movement (centre & bottom). The principle of not using on-premises business signs in a supplementary manner has been breached. There is really no need for these banners since the passer-by's senses are already overwhelmed by an excessive number of signs attached to the building. This is clearly a case of 'more is less.' This banner format is rather untidy while the ease with which it may be erected may lead to sign proliferation. This may be a good reason for not allowing this type of banner as an on-premises business sign at all, but to rather limit it to Class 2giii ~ Signs for sporting events, festivals & exhibitions.



A Corex board attached to the fence of a shopping centre (top, left). Signs like these have a temporary and untidy appearance and have a tendency to proliferate and should therefore not be allowed. On-premises business signs can only be attached to entrance gates and walls if it has a permanent appearance and harmonises with the gate structure.

A free-standing on-premises business sign in front of a shopping centre obstructing pedestrian movement (top right). It may also attract similar free-standing signs and will be more acceptable if it is attached to the building itself as a wall sign or if it is incorporated into a stack sign.

An overwhelming stack sign (bottom left). The large number of panels and the illegibility of most of them are causing a traffic safety problem. A possible solution may be to limit the number of panels and provide each enterprise with an advertising opportunity on a rotational basis.

Panels on a stack sign competing with one another (bottom right). The *Nando's* sign has succeeded in taking visual control and in destroying the visual harmony of the stack sign. There is actually no need for this panel since *Nando's* is situated on the outside of the centre just to the right which means that any other sign attached to the shop will be more than sufficient. It may also fit onto the stack structure as a smaller horizontal panel.



Looking at this shopping centre it is clear that a free-for-all sign policy is being followed with signs from the various enterprises trying to outdo one another. The optometrists even have four on-premises business signs together with a number of sign panels on the stack sign. The stylish stack sign (second from top), which harmonises with the architecture of the shopping centre, provides sufficient sign space and together with well-managed signs attached to the building there would really be no need for additional on-premises business signs.



It seems as if the problem with these free-standing signs originated with signs proliferating on the building, smothering all architectural features and neutralising each other (bottom) – notice the five signs for Tony's. From the building the original battle between the signs had to spill over to the rest of the premises and the sidewalks. Advertising boards are already being attached to traffic signs next to the road (top, right) while on-premises business signs are starting to lose their usefulness. One may ask where this battle will end. Maybe it will only end after the viability of the shopping centre has been destroyed.





Another shopping centre where the proliferation of on-premises business signs has become problematic. It seems as if a stack sign, with larger panels for the two anchor facilities, was erected first, but that this structure was inadequate (top, right). Another stack sign with larger panels was added next to the original structure at a later stage (top, left). Somewhere along the line individual on-premises business signs started multiplying in a free-for-all manner which made the original stack sign redundant. The end result is a dilapidated, rust-streaked stack sign with broken panels.



Normally banners make an important contribution to the visual appeal of shopping centres, but then it should be limited to banners for the centre's anchor functions while it should not be swamped by a hodgepodge of other banners and signs as is the case with this shopping centre.

A taxi terminus, which generates large numbers of pedestrians, is situated next to this shopping centre. The proliferation of signs may impact on pedestrian safety by distracting the attention of motorists. It is also a matter of red pedestrian signs blending in with advertising signs thereby becoming unobtrusive. This is especially the case with the pedestrian yield sign at one of the entrances of the shopping centre. Any [SEA](#) applied to a shopping centre should take the interplay between traffic signs and advertising signs into consideration.



Compiled by Frans Jordaan