

Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Policy

Building Control Service

Approved by Council: February 2009

Current policy



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** It is the policy of Belfast City Council (the Council), as implemented through the Building Control Service (the Service), to provide the City of Belfast with adequate street naming and numbering of buildings to help way-finding by the inhabitants, visitors and people who work in the City and to assist the easy identification of premises by emergency services, postal services and utility providers.
- 1.2** Signage and street naming provision will be delivered in an equitable and fair manner.

This policy is prepared in line with Council's Good Relations Strategy and Equality Scheme in order that the Council fulfils its statutory duty and responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 1.3** Through the provision of new street names, numbering of buildings and continual updating of the corporate gazetteer and Pointer NI database, we will ensure that each property in the Council area will be correctly addressed and have a unique property reference number (UPRN).
- 1.4** In undertaking these functions the primary consideration for the Council is public safety, ensuring that street names are not duplicated and that streets and properties are named and numbered to facilitate easy identification in the event of an emergency.

2.0 Service Delivery

- 2.1 An ability to readily identify properties and being confident that buildings are properly numbered and streets are properly named plays a key role in the efficient and effective value for money services provided by the Council.
- 2.2 A properly administered system for addressing in Belfast also is crucial in enabling the delivery of an equitable property taxation system such as the current system for rating.
- 2.3 The allocation of statutory addresses has an important role in relation to the Government's commitment to improved service delivery through the linking of various organisations' datasets with a common infrastructure based on a definitive list of national addresses. Many service providers require address details before customers can access products.

3.0 Legislation

- 3.1 The statutory basis for this function is contained within Article 11 of the *Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995*. This Order repealed all earlier statutes related to the provision of street names and the numbering of buildings in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 Article 11 of this Order provides for the naming of streets, numbering of buildings and the council's responsibility to provide street signs.
- 3.3 This provision also gives the Council powers to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in a language other than English. In exercising these powers the Council is required to have regard to the views expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street.
- 3.4 The legislation governing this policy also provides the Council with enforcement powers. In discharging any enforcement powers the Service will have regard to the principles of the Enforcement Concordat and the Building Control Service enforcement policy.

4.0 Policy Implementation

- 4.1 When Building Regulations applications are commenced, the Service will advise applicants or their agents if the application creates the need for a new street name. The Service will refer to the Planning Approval list to ascertain new developments in Belfast. If these new developments have been approved by the Planning Service, the Service will send out a street naming and building numbering information pack to the responsible person.
- 4.2 This is particularly relevant on large developments where sales promotion literature often includes names that have not been approved by the Council and may be unacceptable.
- 4.3 Builders / Developers / Estate Agents will be asked to provide a number (usually 2 as a minimum) of alternative names which should not duplicate or sound like existing names in the locality yet be linked to the characteristics of the area (social, historical or geographical).
- 4.4 Building Control will check its own records and will also consult with Royal Mail Address Management to check for duplication of names within the Postcode areas, which may not follow City boundaries.

The Service will also consult with the emergency services to obtain their views if the application may involve duplication of an existing street name; these exercises provide a third party check on the registration of names within the City.

- 4.5 For new street names, changes of street names, major re-numbering, and erection of dual-language street name plates the matter will be considered by the Council's Health and Environmental Services Committee whose decision will be subject to approval at a subsequent council meeting. If an application is not approved it will be referred back to the applicant for alternative suggestions.
- 4.6 Following ratification by Council a notification will be issued to all stakeholders within 7 working days of Council approval being given.
- 4.7 A numbering schedule will then be developed. When possible this information will be included in the initial notification letter and sent to all stakeholders for the numbering of new developments, or communicated in due course.
- 4.8 All Council Members who do not sit on the committee which determines these applications will be notified of any applications made for their electoral areas relating to new street names and renumbering which are reported to committee.

When non-committee Members are notified of applications, they may send comments to the Service within 7 days of receipt of notification. Members will be notified of Council determinations made in respect of applications within their electoral area.

5.0 Building Numbering

- 5.1** There are occasions where the existing naming or numbering of buildings in a street may be unsatisfactory to either property owners/occupants or the Service.
- 5.2** If it is decided that re-numbering is necessary the Service will deal with the application if the re-numbering changes are relating to less than 5 properties.
If the re-numbering affects properties of 5 or more a report will then be brought before Committee for approval and subsequent ratification by full Council. The Royal Mail and other relevant agencies will be informed and advised of any changes in terms of postal numbering.
- 5.3** The Council will endeavour to number sites and premises as soon as it is aware that it is required. On receipt of a written request from the developer or agent a site visit will be made to help determine a suitable numbering scheme for the particular location in question. The Service will then notify the applicant of the correct postal-numbering.

6.0 Renaming a Street

- 6.1 The ability to rename streets is one which is allowed for in legislation governing the naming of streets and persons can make applications as such. The Council will carefully consider any application for renaming within its boundaries, as it is conscious that renaming of streets has profound implications on address management for the city, emergency services and the general public.
- 6.2 Therefore any application received by the Service for the renaming of a street which has the requisite support shall be presented to Council seeking its express approval before proceeding with the application. If approved by Council, the Service officers will then undertake surveys as set out below to progress the application.
- 6.3 The application/request for re-naming of a street should be accompanied by an initial petition of not less than one third of residents of the street showing a positive interest in changing the street name. A request from an individual without support of survey or signed petition will not be considered and the individual will be informed accordingly.
- 6.4 The opinions of all persons affected by a renaming proposal may then be sought. This shall be through survey of all residents listed under the electoral register for that street. All persons over 18 years of age shown as dwelling in a property on the electoral register will be written to requesting an indication of their support for or opposition to the proposed name change.
- 6.5 Only where the support of at least two thirds of occupiers aged over 18 and identified on the electoral register has been demonstrated in any street, will the Council consider a request for renaming. Royal Mail will always be consulted and if the renaming involves a duplicate street name then relevant emergency services will also be consulted as to their views on the proposed street name.
- 6.6 If the result of the survey shows that at least two thirds of the residents are in agreement with the proposed name change then a recommendation will be placed before the Health & Environmental Services Committee for agreement of the change of name.
- 6.7 If approval is granted a notification of the change of street name will be sent to the applicant and other stakeholders for information. The applicant will also be notified if the application for a change of street name is not approved.
- 6.8 Another request or re-application to change a street name which has been refused will not be accepted until a minimum period of 2 years has elapsed from the previous application date for change of the street name.

7.0 Dual Language Street Signs

- 7.1** Please refer to the policy of the Council in respect of dual language street signs which is attached as Appendix A to this document.

8.0 Enforcement

- 8.1** On occasion it is necessary to consider enforcement action to ensure the display of official street names and postal numbers. In line with our enforcement policy informal action will in all cases be pursued in an attempt to resolve the matter. If however, persuasion fails to achieve results action will normally be taken under Article 11 of the *Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995*.

(Article 11, paragraph 5) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 provides that:-

“Any person, who obscures, pulls down, defaces any official nameplate or erects in any street a nameplate showing as the name of the street a name different from the official street name or erects in any street any nameplate purporting to show the name of the street, without authorisation of the Council, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.”

- 8.2** In addition the said Order provides that:-

Where the occupier of a house or building fails to ensure that it is marked with the number approved by the council – the Council may serve on him a notice requiring him to comply with the notice within 7 days from the date on which the notice is served.

If that person fails to comply with the notice they shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

The Council may do anything which he has failed to do and in addition may recover from that person summarily as a civil debt any expenses thereby reasonably incurred.

9.0 Finance

- 9.1** As the erection of street signs and registration of postal numbering are statutory functions the Council will not levy a charge in administering these functions. Where an application for written confirmation of Postal Numbering is made, a Numbering Certificate will be issued by the Council.
- 9.2** The existence and condition of street nameplates will be monitored by officers on a regular basis and repair or replacement carried out. Where signage has been subject to vandalism, repairs will be made or replacement signage erected.

10 Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Guidelines

10.1 The following guidelines will be used to support the operation of this policy.

Naming Streets and Buildings

- (i) New street names shall not duplicate any name already in use in the City or in areas of neighbouring Boroughs close to the Belfast City boundary.

A variation in the terminal word, i.e. 'street', 'road', 'avenue', etc, may not be accepted as sufficient reason to duplicate a name, other than where streets are adjacent or within one development.

- (ii) Subsidiary names (e.g. a row of buildings within an already named road being called '.....Terrace') should not be used.
- (iii) All new street names should end with a suffix such as:-

Street	for any road
Road	for major roads
Way	for major roads
Road	for residential roads
Avenue	for residential roads
Drive	for residential roads
Grove	for residential roads
Lane	for residential roads
Gardens	(subject to no confusion with any local open space)
Mews	for houses around an open yard or along a laneway
Place	for a square with houses
Link	for a road linking two roads
Crescent	for a crescent shaped road
Close	for a cul-de-sac only
Square	for a square only
Hill	for a hillside road only
Circus	for a large roundabout
Terrace	for a terrace of houses (provided is not a subsidiary name)
Court	for apartments or houses around an open yard

The above list is not exhaustive and all decisions on names remain within the authority of the Council.

- (iv) Names which could be viewed as detrimental to the surrounding area such as Abattoir Road, Tip Lane, or names capable of deliberate misinterpretation should not be used.

- (v) The use of North, East, South or West (as in Alfred Road North and Alfred Road South) (or East, West) is only acceptable where the road is continuous and passes over a major junction.
- (vi) Phonetically similar names within a postal area within the City, e.g. Euston Road, Houston Road should not be used.

(a) **The Numbering of Buildings**

- (i) A new street should be numbered with even numbers on one side (left) and odd numbers on the other (right).
- (ii) Small cul de sacs should be numbered consecutively and larger cul de sacs are split for numbering purposes.
- (iii) Private garages and similar buildings used only for housing vehicles, etc. should not be numbered.
- (iv) The number 13 is discretionary in its use. It is commonly included in developments unless requested otherwise.
- (v) Buildings (including those on corner sites) are numbered according to the street in which the main entrance is to be found and the manipulation of numbering in order to secure a 'prestige' address or to avoid an address which is thought to have undesired associations will not be sanctioned.
- (vi) If a building has entrances in more than one street, but is a multi-occupied building and each entrance leads to a separate occupier, then each entrance should be numbered in the appropriate road. Exceptions may be made, depending on the circumstances, for a house divided into flats.
- (vii) A named building is not under the control of the Legislation and will be numbered onto the existing street.
- (vii) Postcodes are the responsibility of Royal Mail Address Management.
- (viii) In residential buildings (e.g. blocks of flats) it is usual to give a street number to each communal entrance.

The numbering of flats within a named or numbered building is outside the scope of these powers, but developers are requested to supply a layout plan and unit or apartment numbers to facilitate Council records.

On each floor the numbering should be in a clockwise direction where this is possible and they should be numbered not lettered e.g. Flat 2, 21 Smith Street, not, Flat A, 21 Smith Street.

- (ix) When one large house in a road is demolished and replaced by (say) four smaller houses or in rural situations, where all available numbers are taken up, it may be necessary to include alpha-numeric references. E.g. 34A, 34B, 34C, 34D.

Appendix A

Dual Language Street Signs Policy

1.0 Legislation

The statutory basis for this function is contained within *Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995*. This Order commenced on 15 March 1995, it provides for street naming, street numbering and the provision of street signs. It also gives Councils the discretionary power to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in a language other than English.

2.0 Introduction

The legislation requires the Council, in deciding whether and how to exercise its discretion to erect a street name in a language other than English, to take account of the views of the occupiers of premises in the street.

For the purposes of this policy occupiers shall be taken to be any person whose name appears in the current Electoral Register plus the owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, but not employees in such premises.

These policy proposals were developed in close consultation with the Director of Legal Services and are designed to promote consistent and reasonable responses. However, the policy should not be applied in such a way as to prevent due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of each application. Having regard to the significant resource consequences of administering the implications of the policy, the policy should be reactive in nature.

3.0 Procedure

The procedures for seeking and assessing the views of occupiers and the criteria to be applied in deciding whether to erect a street sign in a language other than English are as follows:

- (i) Only applications supported by a petition representing not less than one third of the people appearing on the Electoral Register of the street for which the application is made will be progressed.
- (ii) Where the foregoing requirements have been met the Council will canvass by post all people appearing on the Electoral Register of that street and seek their views on the request to erect a street sign in a second specified language. This letter is designed so as to make the expression of views as simple as possible. Reply will be by way of a pre-paid envelope and should be returned within one month of receipt.
- (iii) Where two thirds or more of the occupiers appearing on the Electoral Register have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign will be erected. People not returning a reply will be deemed not to be in favour of the application.

- (iv) Consideration will to be given to "long streets" where majority opinion on whether to have a second language street sign may differ between readily identifiable, substantial lengths of the street. In these circumstances consideration will be given to the erection of dual language nameplates in those substantial portions of the street where the required majority of occupiers have expressed a wish for such a nameplate.
- (v) When a decision has been taken to erect a street sign in a second language the translation from English to that second language will be carried out by an independent, competent Body such as the appropriate Language Department at Queen's University.
- (vi) With regard to the design and placing of the street signs the second language sign shall be located immediately below the English sign and the size of lettering shall be smaller than the English version to avoid any risk of confusion to the emergency services.

4.0 Adoption by Council

This policy was adopted by the Council on 1 September 1998.

