

# London Transport Users Committee

## Where am I?

Street name signs in London

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Preface	
Chair's Foreword	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Legislation and guidance.....	2
3. Consultation.....	4
4. Practice in other cities.....	10
5. Observation and discussion.....	14
6. Recommendations.....	21

*Appendices: A- 1952 London County Council Regulations*

*B- Department of Transport Circular 3/93*

## **London Transport Users Committee**

*Speaking for transport users in and around London*



LTUC is the official watchdog for transport users in and around London.

The Committee's role is to:

- Investigate suggestions and complaints from users who are dissatisfied with the response received from the service provider;
- Conduct independent research and produce publications on issues affecting transport users;
- Maintain a regular dialogue with operators on differing aspects of their services;
- Assess the impact and make recommendations if proposals are made for the closure of a railway line or a station.

Our remit covers transport in and around London including the Underground, the National Rail network, London's bus network, Docklands Light Railway, Croydon Tramlink, taxis and other users of the Greater London Road Network. To find out more about us see our website **[www.ltuc.org.uk](http://www.ltuc.org.uk)**

# Where am I?

## Street name signs in London

### Foreword

**by Suzanne May**  
**Chair of the London Transport Users Committee**

Without street nameplates, getting to ones destination by any mode would be nearly impossible. It is an important issue of detail that is so often overlooked, but could, relatively easily, make such an important contribution to the travelling experience. Business, travellers, nor the emergency services would be able to operate. 14 Acacia Avenue, N16 would be almost meaningless.

Thankfully we are not in that position and most streets have nameplates and we can get around. However, my Committee believes that the situation with street nameplates in London could and should be improved. Often nameplates are missing from one end of a street or are just on one side of a road, too high to see or too low and so obscured by parked or queuing cars. Too often they are vandalised or neglected.

I feel strongly that this is not just an issue of getting around, but also of personal security. Strangers to an area often feel more insecure and vulnerable. You can more easily be identified as a stranger if you are peering around looking for the name of the street that you're in.

The regulations and guidance to local authorities effectively dates back to before the second world war and most of it is excellent, but sadly local authorities are not following it. We hope this study will prompt compliance that would much improve the current situation. The existing regulations and guidance would benefit from being updated to take into account the changed circumstances, and we hope a review will be undertaken as soon as possible.

Continued

We welcome the Mayor's proposal, in his transport strategy, to provide guidance to the boroughs on street name signage and that boroughs are developing street design manuals - there are some excellent examples already. We hope the Mayor's guidance and the street design manuals will take on board this study's findings and the needs of travellers, though we do recognise that boroughs will want to retain some diversity. We believe a good standard of street nameplates can be compatible with some local variation as long as the basic information meets traveller's needs and is located where travellers are expecting to find it.

This has been a really fascinating study and has sparked off much discussion. I would like to acknowledge the work of Hugh Collis who we commissioned to undertake the study. Whilst Hugh did much of the work associated with this report the discussion, conclusions and recommendations are LTUC's. As such I commend this report to all who are involved in the planning and development of London's transport systems.



Comments on this report will be warmly welcomed.

*Please send them to :*

**Vincent Stops  
London Transport Users Committee  
6 Middle Street  
London EC1A 7JA**

# **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 London Transport Users Committee has commissioned research into street nameplates in London. The following brief was issued and the work undertaken by transport consultant Hugh Collis.

## **Study brief**

- 1.2 Identify the current statutory requirements and extant official guidance, codes of practice, etc., from Governmental and/or relevant professional sources.
- 1.3 Ascertain (by correspondence and/or interview) the views of relevant London-wide bodies – e.g. TfL Street Management, ALG, LOTAG, GLAD, Living Streets, London Cycling Campaign, London Forum, Civic Trust, AARAC, LTDA.
- 1.4 Ascertain (by interview) the views and current practices of a representative cross-section of (say six) London borough councils.
- 1.5 Conduct a sample photographic survey of a range of locations across London illustrating variations in current practice.
- 1.6 Investigate (by correspondence) current practice in a limited sample of cities elsewhere – say New York, Paris, Berlin + 2 others.
- 1.7 Prepare a written report of findings and make recommendations.
- 1.8 Present the report to a meeting of the Committee.

## 2 Legislation and Guidance

- 2.1 There is legislation, dating back originally to the Town Improvement Clauses Act 1847, which enables local authorities to erect street nameplates and gives them responsibility for the naming of streets. The Public Health Act 1925 contains provisions relating to street names which could be adopted by any borough or urban district council and applied by order of the Minister of Housing to any rural district council. Where this Act applies there is an obligation on the local authority to erect and maintain nameplates.
- 2.2 London has separate powers dating back to the London Building Acts (Amendment) Act 1939. Regulations were made in 1952 under this act, relating to the London County Council (LCC) area. In 1963 (see appendix A) these regulations were applied to the Greater London Council (GLC) area and in 1985 the Local Government Act transferred those duties to the individual boroughs. The London boroughs' responsibilities include their own borough roads, the Transport for London Road Network and private streets.
- 2.3 The powers give local authorities the right to attach street nameplates to walls and fences of private property. The exercise of this power appears to be entirely at the discretion of the authority. There does not appear to be a legal obligation to notify the owner, although obviously it is courteous to do so.
- 2.4 The responsibility for street nameplates is part of local government law, not highway law. National responsibility lies with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, as the department responsible for planning and local government, and not with the Department for Transport (DfT). However, national guidance as to how local authorities should apply the legislation is contained in Department of Transport (DoT) Circular 3/93. (see appendix B).
- 2.5 Circular 3/93 is similar to, but much less prescriptive than, the LCC 1952 regulations. For example, whereas the regulations state that:

- *Street nameplates shall be fixed within 10 feet of every street corner.... on both sides of each street...*

Circular 3/93 states:

- *street nameplates should be fixed as near as possible to street corners.... The nameplate should normally be within 3 metres...., but.... this may be varied up to a maximum of 6m.*
- *nameplates should normally be fixed at each street corner.*

- 2.6 The main requirements of the LCC 1952 regulations and Circular 3/93 cover sign installation and design, including:

- height and location relative to a junction;

- the required distribution of nameplates in different circumstances, e.g. on lengthy roads, at T-junctions etc;
- letter spacing;
- capital lettering and font style;
- letter height;
- colours of lettering, background (not recommended) and contrast
- abbreviations allowed, e. g. Ave., Cres., St, etc;
- specifications for the materials to be used for the construction of nameplates and their maintenance;
- specifications for any additional information, e.g. district identifier, should be in smaller lettering, the LCC regulations specify inclusion of the postal district in Signal Red.

### 3 Consultation

#### 3.1 London Boroughs

3.1.1 Consultation letters were sent out to all 32 London Boroughs and the Corporation of London in September 2002. The following Boroughs replied:

Barking and Dagenham	Havering
Bromley	Hounslow
Camden	Kensington and Chelsea
Ealing	Lambeth
Hackney	Sutton
Hammersmith and Fulham	Wandsworth
Harrow	

3.1.2 Three boroughs acknowledged the letter but did not follow up with a reply. The remaining boroughs did not respond.

#### Responses

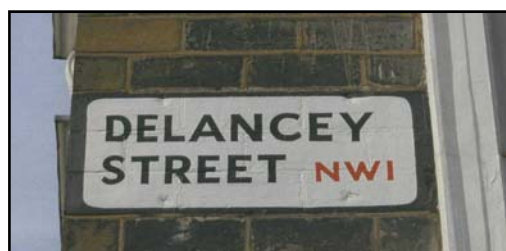
3.1.3 The boroughs that responded cover a range of inner and outer London boroughs, with examples from all parts of London.

3.1.4 While some authorities were not aware of Circular 3/93, most authorities seemed to be following the guidelines in part. Only one of the local authorities use the 1952 LCC regulations. Half of the eight that responded to the question regarding a formal policy, said they had a policy.

3.1.5 All boroughs respect historic signs, and if the style does not meet modern requirements then boroughs prefer to supplement them with an additional sign rather than replace them. The most comprehensive policy provided was from the London Borough of Camden. They have a Streetscape Design Manual, which covers all street furniture. This guide provided for the retention of the style of the original London borough's nameplates where they still exist. Camden has secured contractors who will maintain signs painted on walls, mosaic signs and other special types. The borough has a corporate style that is used when there is no historic sign existing.



Present Camden nameplate used at high levels. This font is used because many residents found the Franklin Gothic Condensed font hard to read at high levels, L B Camden.



Historic nameplate painted straight onto the building wall used in the former St Pancras area, L B Camden.



- 3.1.6 All authorities use capital lettering and letters 80-100mm high, and tell us they follow Circular 3/93 recommendations on location. Some authorities mount signs on lighting columns and traffic sign posts. Barking and Dagenham borough normally mount signs at high level on lamp columns or separate posts, as this avoids difficulty with signs on buildings, and the problem of vandalism that low level signs are subject to. The borough believes that the recommendations should permit smaller letter heights on residential roads.
- 3.1.7 There is no consistency with respect to the inclusion of borough names or postal districts. Some boroughs include one or the other or both, and some include neither. Outside the London postal districts no postal district identifier is provided by any of the respondents, and one borough on the boundary provides postal district identifier inside the London postal district but not outside.
- 3.1.8 Most boroughs use black lettering on a white background with red for the postal district. Lewisham and Bromley were observed to use their corporate colours, white on blue in the case of Lewisham and white on green in Bromley. Hackney's response states that they use green on white, although recent white on green signs were also observed.



Green on white and white on green signs attached cantilever style to a lamp column, L B Hackney.

3.1.9 Most boroughs provide replacement nameplates as and when damage or loss is reported, and do not normally keep stocks of replacements. Hounslow and Bromley reported having 3,300 and 9,658 nameplates respectively so this is not surprising. That only two knew how many nameplates they had indicates that in most boroughs they have probably not been surveyed and included in computerised street furniture inventories. Some boroughs had recently undertaken or were undertaking surveys to examine the condition of the stock of nameplates, but this appears to have been done on an ad hoc basis. When a replacement is required a site visit is normally undertaken to establish the type and mounting of sign required.

3.1.10 No boroughs reported difficulties with loss of nameplates during building works, although it was observed that there were a number of locations where they were missing.

## **3.2 Other Consultees**

3.2.1 30 non-borough organisations were consulted. These included the emergency services, and other statutory and voluntary organisations concerned with transport.

### **Statutory and Government Organisations**

3.2.2 Responsibility for street nameplates currently lies with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Despite two letters we were unable to obtain a response. In a subsequent telephone discussion we were referred to the Department for Transport.

3.2.3 Transport for London Street Management advised us that they were not responsible for street nameplates and we therefore agreed they would not respond.

3.2.4 The following organisations replied:

- Transport for London (Cycling Centre of Excellence)
- Transport for London (London Buses)
- Transport for London (Public Carriage Office)
- Royal Mail
- Metropolitan Police
- London Ambulance Service
- London Fire Brigade

3.2.5 While responsibility for street nameplates in London lies with the boroughs and not TfL, the Mayor's Transport Strategy proposes (proposal 4G22) to provide guidance to boroughs by 2003.

3.2.6 English Heritage nor the Association of London Government responded. However, English Heritage have published policy on street nameplates. As would be expected they are supportive of historic local variation in design and

material, but they take a very dim view of nameplates mounted on poles and believe this practice should be discontinued on the grounds that it *simply adds more clutter to the street*.

### **Voluntary and Trade Organisations**

#### 3.2.7 Replies were received from:

Association of Road Traffic Safety and Management  
CTC (formerly the Cyclists Touring Club)  
Freight Transport Association  
Institution of Highways and Transportation  
Licensed Taxi Drivers Association

3.2.8 No replies were received from motoring organisations, disability charities, amenity societies or the other pedestrian and cyclist pressure groups.

3.2.9 The low response from pressure groups and the voluntary sector was disappointing, but, it is to be hoped, only reflects their lack of capacity rather than the importance of the issue to them. The absence of a response from the motoring organisations and only one response from the taxi and minicab trade was surprising, despite follow up calls made to the AA and RAC. Follow up letters to the transport pressure groups produced a response from the CTC, but not the London Cycling Campaign or Living Streets.

### **Responses**

3.2.10 Most concerns were that signs were missing or obscured. The police, fire and ambulance services and the Royal Mail, unsurprisingly, favoured including postal districts, particularly where street names are duplicated (note: there are 17 High Roads and 50 High Streets in the London A-Z). This was because personnel from outside the locality can be confused by such duplicates – a situation that the emergency services are particularly keen to avoid.

3.2.11 London Buses have similar concerns, particularly when drivers are using their radios to call for assistance and need to be able to quote a precise location.

A similar concern was the signing of estates that do not have a conventional street layout, or where the main access to properties is from a pedestrian route. Clear schematic maps on approaches to the estate are required. In some cases their complexity is such that they cannot be read from vehicles.



This sign could not be read from a vehicle, and the detail is such that it is necessary to stand close to it to read the text, L B Islington.

3.2.13 The Association of Road Safety and Traffic Management, that represents sign manufacturers, wanted signs to be larger, although no-one else was concerned about this. The Freight Transport Association, representing the delivery industry, was concerned about missing signs and also favoured the use of postal districts.

3.2.14 The taxi trade would welcome more widespread provision of building numbers on nameplates in long streets, and were concerned about obstruction of low-level signs by parked vehicles and the absence of signs on main roads at T-junctions.

3.2.15 The PCO stated: *Signage in terms of street nameplates suffers in London through a lack of consistency and application. A new standard needs to be defined to provide adequate and visible coverage in a uniform style.*

3.2.16 They also told us that street numbers are a must for taxi drivers. They provide a clear directional indicator particularly relevant as a driver would not be expected to know such detail on arriving at, say, a T-junction.

3.2.17 The PCO was concerned about those boroughs, like Lewisham and Bromley, which use coloured backgrounds, as the colours often fade and the signs become difficult to read.



This shows Lewisham's corporate blue colour, and is the only borough of those studied that does not use red for the postal district. Lewisham is the only area in which lower case lettering was observed on public roads, L B Lewisham.



This shows the use of Bromley's corporate colour of green, used as a background for white lettering. Bromley do not include postal districts, L B Bromley.

## **4 Practice in other Cities**

- 4.1 Requests for information were sent to the other capital cities in the UK, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, to Bristol and Newcastle, and to New York City, USA. Replies were received from Edinburgh, Belfast and New York City. Observations of current practice were also made in Paris, France, Stockholm, Sweden and Mallorca, Spain.

### **Edinburgh and Belfast**

- 4.2 In Scotland advice was issued in a Scottish Office circular in December 1997. This gives the same advice as the DoT Circular 3/93. Edinburgh City Council follows this guidance. Edinburgh does not attach signs to lamp columns, but reports that in Glasgow this is done in areas where there are a lot of cleared sites.
- 4.3 In Northern Ireland powers are given to the local authorities by Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which superseded previous legislation. It does not give specific guidance on street nameplates but Belfast City Council's practice is generally in accordance with DoT Circular 3/93, except that some signs are blue on white. There is an established practice of using bilingual signs.

### **New York**

- 4.4 Traffic signs, including street nameplates, in the USA are covered by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) issued by the Federal Highway Administration of the US Department of Transportation. Although the city is divided into five boroughs the highway authority for all roads, except some New York State freeways, is the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). Signs are double-sided flag-type signs, normally attached to lamp columns at the kerbside. At a typical crossroads there would be signs on two diagonally opposite corners, with flags pointing along the streets concerned. As a name change is unusual where one street crosses another there would therefore normally be two signs for each street name at each intersection. NYCDOT do not attach signs to buildings, although this practice was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.5 Upper case initials are normally 152mm high, with lower case letters measuring 114mm. Where the name is long or speed limits are lower then signs can have 102mm initial capitals. Abbreviations to words like Avenue are used. The permissible abbreviations are listed in MUTCD. Abbreviated words are usually in smaller type. Signs have white lettering on a green background.
- 4.6 NYCDOT report that they have little problems with building works, as they rarely affect signs at the kerbside. Postal districts and borough names are not included on the signs, although signs in Midtown Manhattan have the Statue of Liberty logo. Signs are made of aluminium and are not reflectorised in the urban area, although they are illuminated by the lamp column to which they

are affixed. MUTCD requires retro-reflective surfacing or lighting that shows the same shape and colour both day and night. Some illuminated signs have been installed by the Grand Central Partnership, a Business Improvement District in Midtown Manhattan. NYCDOT are experimenting with illuminated overhead signs.



These green signs in Chicago comply with the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and are therefore the same as those used in New York.

## Paris

- 4.7 Information on the history of street nameplates in Paris was obtained from the website <http://ruavista.com>. The current template dates from 1847 and is one of the oldest graphic signs in the world still in use. Street nameplates date from 1728 when the Lieutenant Général de Police de Paris decreed that all owners of houses at the beginning and end of streets should erect street nameplates, and in the following year he specified stone tablets and the size of the engraved lettering. The lettering and a grooved border were to be coloured black. In 1806, Napoleon decreed that the new inscriptions were to be in oil and at the expense of the Paris commune. These became illegible over time and an 1847 decree specified that the plaques should be made of porcelain baked at high temperatures.



Nameplates in Paris have the Arrondissement (District) at the top. Type is normally block capitals. Names can sometimes be quite long and are placed on several lines of type in order to limit the width of the plate.

- 4.8 In Paris, street nameplates are now on metal plates with white lettering on a dark blue background, with a green border. The white on blue scheme is also used for street numbers. Most nameplates have a semicircle over the name with the number of the arrondissement (district). The letters are upper case and 80mm high although sometimes prepositions, such as 'de', are in smaller letters. The words may be in a single line or two or more lines, in order to fit to the available space. Often they are fixed to columns in shop fronts and therefore it is helpful to have more than one line of text in order to fit into the restricted width. They often contain additional information in the centre of Paris, such as a note on the person the street has been named after.
- 4.9 Most nameplates in central districts are affixed to the wall of the buildings. Where the building is set back, or there is no building, they may be affixed to a fence or on a single freestanding pole. Rather than using a separate pole the nameplate may be fixed to other poles such as street lamps or traffic signal poles. Sometimes they are glued directly onto the glazing of a shop front, where there is insufficient space on a column or wall.
- 4.10 Every junction has nameplates on both sides of the street. Recently duplicate plates appear to have been fixed on many buildings at a lower level, about two metres above street level. This makes it easier to see a nameplate on the same side of the street when standing on the pavement, as many are too high to be easily read.
- 4.11 Some larger signs, internally illuminated with black lettering on a white background, were observed at main road junctions where the normal signs might be difficult to read from a motor vehicle.

### **Mallorca**

- 4.12 Nameplates were generally small and affixed to buildings, and normally engraved on a masonry tablet. In older parts of the city of Palma there were examples of glazed ceramic tiles and mosaics set into the stucco of the building. Letter heights and styles were not standardised. Block capitals are used, generally 60-80mm high, and different lines on the same nameplate could be of different sizes. Outside the urban centres enamel steel flag type signs are used, containing the coat of arms of the municipality.
- 4.13 In some town and city centre areas there are large internally illuminated signs. They share posts with advertising for local businesses, usually fast food restaurants, and presumably have been funded by the advertising.



In Palma de Mallorca many signs are ceramic tiles. Letter height varies up to a maximum of about 70mm.



## Stockholm

- 4.14 In Stockholm all nameplates are black on white metal plates, with lower case script. All signs list the building numbers on the adjacent blocks and also the name of the plot on which that block stands. These names are related to the land registration. In the city centre nameplates are affixed to buildings. In the suburban areas they are usually attached to lighting columns, although some have their own poles. At corners they have two flag signs at right angles pointing down the streets. There are signs at all junctions, including those with alleys that have names, and on both sides of the street. The signs on opposite sides of the street have different block names and each one references the building numbers on that side of the street. The capital letters are 60mm high in all cases. In most cases this seems to be sufficient except for very wide streets.



In Stockholm all nameplates are black on white with lower case letters. The street name is given above the line and below the line the name of the street block (Midas) is given together with the building numbers of buildings in that block.

## 5 Observations and Discussion

### Legislation and guidance

- 5.1 The 1952 LCC regulations and the Department of Transport's Circular 3/93 guidance for street nameplates in the UK have not been updated for many years. While there is scope for improvement, the contents of both the guidance and regulations are nevertheless near satisfactory. London's current poor state with respect to signage is largely explained by inadequate implementation of these regulations and guidelines. Many of the local authorities responding to this study appeared to be aware of Circular 3/93 and seemed to be following this guidance to a degree. However, few of the responding local authorities were aware of the 1952 LCC regulations, which unlike the Circular 3/93 guidance, are mandatory.
- 5.2 Compared to the Circular 3/93 guidance, the 1952 LCC regulations are fairly prescriptive in parts. For example they require nameplates to be fixed *...within 10 feet of every street corner on both sides of each street*. However, the guidance is more lax requiring only that the *...nameplates should normally be fixed at each street corner, but that at minor cross roads one plate on each side of the street on the offside of traffic emerging from the road may be sufficient*. In other parts, the regulations are open to wide interpretation.
- 5.3 There is scope for revising both the regulations and guidance to take account of modern day conditions and to improve wayfinding for users of all modes of transport. The regulations and guidance need to be better enforced, and their contents both more prescriptive in some parts and flexible in others, if an improved standard of street nameplate provision is to be provided for users. Any changes made to the guidance and regulations must aim to address the various issues outlined and discussed in the remainder of this section. LTUC's recommendations are listed in section 6.

### Installation

- 5.4 In London, many signs are missing or vandalised, obscured, or were never erected in the first place. This is the most serious problem relating to street signage in London that needs to be urgently addressed.



On exiting this one-way street there is no indication of the street name. It is the approach to Gower Street, L B Camden.

- 5.5 Low-level signs favoured in the UK (the UK is the only country identified in the study that uses low-level signs) are often obscured by parked cars. This was probably not a particular problem when the practice was originally adopted as there were far fewer cars in circulation compared to today.



The nameplate can just be seen through the rear window of the car, but cannot be read and is frequently obscured by parked vehicles, L B Haringey.

- 5.6 The mixture of high-level and low-level signs often makes it difficult to locate the sign due to the unpredictability of their location.
- 5.7 Often high shop windows will mean signs are placed very high and as such can be difficult to locate. The lack of an appropriate wall will mean a far from ideal location, in an unpredictable position, too far down the street.



Here there is no suitable location for a street nameplate. The compromise seems to be one that is too high, the other too far down the road that will often be hidden by cars, L.B. Haringey.

- 5.8 Some authorities, such as Barking and Dagenham, prefer to use high-level signs to keep them out of reach, as spray-painting and the attachment of stickers to signs is commonplace. Many signs throughout London and in the international cities studied are located at high-level between 2.5m and 3m. The signs are easily readable by both pedestrians and motorists at this height, providing the street is not particularly narrow. Such high-level signs avoid the problems of both vandalism and obstruction by vehicles.



Typical vandalism to a low-level sign, L B Haringey.

- 5.9 Where nameplates are mounted on a building wall and are only provided on one side of the road, they are often difficult for pedestrians to read, particularly if located high up and on the same side of the street as the pedestrian. If signs were to be provided on both sides of the road, pedestrians would find it easier to read them. Where such signs are difficult to read from the adjacent footway, a lower level sign could be provided additionally.
- 5.10 Repeater nameplates, such as are provided in Paris, could be useful in some locations and is a requirement in the LCC 1952 regulations (*...the nameplates shall be repeated at intervals of approximately 200 yards on alternate sides of the street.*). However, repeater nameplates in Paris are approximately 2m above ground level so can suffer from vandalism problems. A minimum fixing height of 2.5 metres would therefore be more appropriate.
- 5.11 Double-sided nameplates mounted on poles, or other street furniture, located at the street corner and kerbside are probably the most useful insofar as they can often be located in a consistent position and at a height that avoids vandalism and obstruction by vehicles. Such practice is standard in New York.
- 5.12 Signs attached to street lighting columns or poles are likely to be more easily legible as they are not obstructed by overhanging parts of a building. The installation of signs on poles, though desirable may increase the amount of street furniture. It will certainly be preferable to use existing lamp-posts and poles if they are located at the kerbside, on street corners at intersections, in a position where users would expect to find the sign. There is clearly a trade-off between minimising street clutter and standardisation of sign location.

- 5.13 Where nameplates are attached to posts or lamp columns there was some concern that such nameplates can easily be turned to face in the wrong direction. It should be possible to specify a fixing that prevents signs being rotated around the pole easily. Where signs are symmetrically mounted on poles or street furniture they will be less easily rotated out of position or bent than nameplates that are mounted at one end.



Double-sided nameplate attached to lamp columns also includes the no-through road sign in a location that is very visible all travellers, L B Hackney.

- 5.14 One of the areas of greatest deficiency is at T-junctions, where nameplates opposite the minor road are frequently missing (or obscured by parked cars). This is despite being a requirement of both the regulations and guidance. Nameplates do not require to be read from a long distance, as any approaching vehicle has to stop at the junction. There is often a lighting column directly opposite the minor road at a T-junction, as it is good practice to locate them there so that travellers can readily appreciate that they are approaching a junction. It seems that normal practice in these locations should be to attach a sign to the lighting column, or a pole if the latter does not exist.



A nameplate opposite a T-junction is too much of a rarity in London, L B Hammersmith and Fulham.



At this T-Junction the street name changes. Chiswick High Road is to the right, but unsigned, L B Hammersmith and Fulham.

## Font and text layout

- 5.15 The size of lettering used on street nameplates is important and will inevitably be a compromise as there will be a trade-off between readability and location practicality. Drivers, cyclists, taxis and bus passengers will want them to be large so that they can read them whilst travelling at normal speeds. The visually impaired will also want a larger size than those with good sight. However, minimisation of street clutter, streetscape design, the practicality of finding a suitable location, and being able to safely mount nameplates on buildings, existing street furniture or poles, may favour a smaller letter size and hence a smaller nameplate.
- 5.16 Circular 3/93 recommends using capitals of 100mm and 150mm for fast roads, whereas the 1952 LCC regulations specify capitals in the range of 102-127mm. In comparison to the UK, the EU cities studied use much smaller capital letters of 60-80mm in height. New York uses much larger letters, with 152mm for capitals and 102mm for small case letters.
- 5.17 New York is the only city studied where street nameplates can be easily read by motorists passing at normal speeds. This is a function primarily of location as nameplates are mounted on poles at street corners, but also of font size and font type as New York uses small case letters.
- 5.18 All London boroughs that responded to us said they use capital letters, as recommended by Circular 3/93 and contained in the 1952 LCC regulations. The justification for this is that it is necessary to avoid confusion with direction signs. As street nameplates are distinguished from direction signs by style, location and content, it seems difficult to imagine that confusion could arise. Lower case letters with initial capitals are used in direction signs because they are easier to read. This is confirmed in the publication 'Sign Design Guide' (produced jointly by the RNIB's Joint Mobility Unit and the Sign Design Society). In addition, small case letters require less space compared to capital letters, allowing smaller nameplates to be used. Some of the overseas countries considered in this report use lower case text for both direction signs and street nameplates.



An example of a private street with lower case nameplate – a council housing estate, L B Islington.

- 5.19 Nameplates with the text on more than one line are usually a more attractive, easier to read and a more practical shape than those with the text on one line, when they are mounted at higher level on walls and posts.



Long names are more compact when placed on more than one line of text, City of Westminster.

- 5.20 Background colours are specifically not recommended by the Circular 3/93. The 1952 LCC regulations require black lettering on a white background and the PCO prefer no background colouring due to their experience of it fading. The PCO specifically highlights problems in Bromley and Lewisham.

#### **Building numbers and postcodes**

- 5.21 There is benefit in showing building numbers on street nameplates. Currently this is only done sporadically on longer streets in this country, but the information would be useful in finding addresses if nameplates with street numbers were more widely used. It would be particularly beneficial if building numbers were shown opposite the side street at T-junctions and intersections, so that travellers could know which way to turn to find the address they seek. In town centres and on shopping parades numbers are omitted on shop fronts and business premises, and those that are there are often difficult to find amidst advertising signs. Numbers on street nameplates would be especially useful in these areas. However, building proprietors should be required to display the building number in a location easily visible from the kerbside directly outside or opposite the building. In many other countries building proprietors are legally required to fix numbers to buildings.



Some authorities show street numbers on nameplates for longer streets, L B Hackney.

- 5.22 Borough and postal district are valuable for wayfinding, particularly for the emergency services and the Post Office, so should be included on all street nameplates. The letter height for borough identifiers or postal district does not need to be large. Postal districts should be identified in Post Office Signal Red, as required by the 1952 LCC regulations.

### **Street nameplate policies**

- 5.23 Councils should have a comprehensive streetscape guide and policy. This document should include, for example, procedures relating to implementation of any policies or regulations relating to street nameplates or street furniture, including their maintenance. The Camden guide is recommended as a model.
- 5.24 The practice of most authorities in the preservation of historic nameplates could continue, with a modern supplementary plate if the old one does not comply with the regulations and guidance.



## 6 Recommendations

### Legislation and guidance

- 6.1 The existing 1952 LCC regulations and DoT's Circular 3/93 guidance, currently applicable to street nameplates in London, date back to before the second world war and have not provided satisfactory provision. This is largely because there is widespread non-compliance with the regulations and guidance, particularly with respect to having a nameplate present where needed. The Circular 3/93 guidance is voluntary so local authorities are not legally bound to abide by it. While the London Boroughs are legally bound by the 1952 LCC regulations most of the responding local authorities did not seem to be aware of these regulations.
- 6.2 This study illustrates how the design and installation of a street nameplate depends on many factors that are often particular to the local environment and difficult trade-offs may need to be made. While there is a need for minimum standards and a degree of standardisation, there is also a need for flexibility to enable these factors and trade-offs to be taken into account.
- 6.3 We welcome the Mayor's proposal, as set out in his transport strategy, to take action in this area. To improve the current inadequate situation with respect to street name signage, LTUC recommends:
- that boroughs be made aware of the fact that they are required to comply with the 1952 LCC regulations;
  - that the 1952 LCC regulations be reviewed to ensure that they take account of present day circumstances, that they are sufficiently flexible to take account of local circumstances, but at the same time sufficiently prescriptive to ensure that a sufficient degree of standardisation is achieved while also avoiding wide interpretation;
  - that guidance is developed to complement the regulations and assist with their implementation; and
  - that the main aim of the legislation and guidance is to ensure that users of *all* modes of transport (including bus, taxi, tram, car, walking, cycling) are able to find their way around the streets of London without difficulty – this aim is to be given greater weighting, to a reasonable degree, relative to other competing interests that impact on the design and installation of nameplates e.g. the aesthetic quality of the street; minimisation of street clutter.
- 6.4 With respect to reviewing and updating regulations and guidance relating to street nameplates, LTUC recommends the following, based on the findings of this study.

## Installation

- 6.5 In London, many signs are missing or vandalised, obscured or were never erected in the first place. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Transport for London and local authorities must adopt enforcement measures to address this problem.
- 6.6 The minimum height of a street nameplate must be such that the problems of vandalism and vehicle obstruction are addressed. The maximum height must be such that the sign is easily readable. The minimum-maximum height range must be as limited as possible as users will find it easier to find nameplates if they can expect them to appear at a particular height (e.g. 2.5m- 3.5m). In all cases the street nameplate must be readable by all transport users, so an exception may be necessary for streets/alleys that are narrower than a minimum street width.
- 6.7 At intersections and T-junctions the nameplate should be located within a maximum distance from the street corner (e.g. 3m as specified by the 1952 LCC regulations). A nameplate on an approach road or side street should be easily readable so that it is not necessary for a car or cyclist to suddenly slow down (below the normal speed limit of the road) in order to read or find the sign. Sudden or excessive braking or turning without indicating can cause collisions. Minimising the distance of the nameplate from the street corner will also help all travellers due to increased predictability of nameplate location.
- 6.8 Fixing nameplates to buildings is often not appropriate as the building is set too far back from the street or it is not possible to fix the sign at the desired height due to lack of a suitable surface or overhangs. In those circumstances street lamp-posts or existing posts are preferable as they are often near to the kerbside and street corner. Fixing nameplates to lamp-posts ensures the nameplate is lit at night. If this is not possible, a new post should be used.



Both of these installations locate the street nameplate where the traveller would expect to see it, City of Westminster, L B Hammersmith and Fulham

- 6.9 All street nameplates, apart from exceptional streets such as narrow alleys, should be illuminated at night.
- 6.10 The 1952 LCC regulations regarding installation on both sides of the street should be applied. This may be relaxed where a pole mounting, with a double-sided nameplate is used, so long as the font size and font type means that the sign is readable from both sides of the street.
- 6.11 Nameplates should be repeated every 200m on roads longer than a certain length.
- 6.12 The installation of street nameplates at all T-junctions as described in the 1952 LCC regulations should be applied.
- 6.13 Heritage signs may be kept in place but should be supplemented by a modern sign if it does not comply with regulations.

### **Font and text layout**

- 6.14 The minimum letter height should take account of the needs of the visually impaired. While vehicle drivers are required to have vision of a certain standard as a condition of holding a driving licence, this is not the case for pedestrians and bus passengers. The font size will depend on the width of the street, the traffic speed limit of the street or intersecting streets, the height of the sign and the size and shape of the nameplate that the text must be fitted on to.
- 6.15 Small case letters, with an initial capital letter, should be used as they are easier to read and take up less space on the nameplate.
- 6.16 Text does not need to be restricted to one line of text. In laying out the text on the nameplate, consideration should be given primarily to readability but also to the aesthetics of the sign and the practical issues relating to mounting it on a post.
- 6.17 Black lettering on a white background should be standard as required by the 1952 LCC regulations.
- 6.18 The white background of a nameplate should be a reflective surface to ensure night readability.
- 6.19 The font style should be as described by Circular 3/93.

### **Building numbers and postal districts**

- 6.20 Building numbers, possibly with directional arrows, should be standard practice. Building proprietors could be legally required to fix a number - complying with a certain standard to ensure readability - to buildings.
- 6.21 The postal district should be set out in Signal Red as required by the 1952 regulations.
- 6.22 Borough or area identifier should be included in small lettering.

### **Street nameplate policies**

- 6.23 Local authorities should be required to develop a comprehensive streetscape guide and policy, which should include policies relating to the design, location and maintenance of street nameplates.

*Appendices: A- 1952 London County Council Regulations  
B- Department of Transport Circular 3/93*

## London County Council

### Street naming

Regulations made by the London County Council on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1952, under section 9 of the London Building Acts (Amendment) Act, 1939, relating to the setting up of names of streets, ways, places, rows of houses or blocks of buildings.

- (1) Street nameplates shall be fixed within 10 feet of every street corner (excluding the width of the public footway) on both sides of each street and may be placed on part of a building or structure. On straight lengths of street without intersections, the nameplates shall be repeated at intervals of approximately 200 yards on alternate sides of the street. At "T" junctions, a nameplate shall be placed directly opposite the side street. If the name of a street changes other than at a junction, both names shall be displayed at the point of change indicating to which parts of the street the names refer.
- (2) If in any particular street the local authority decides that the number of nameplates required by regulation (1) would be excessive (e.g., by reason of the arrangement or frequency of intersections in a main road), it shall have power to modify the application of the regulation accordingly.
- (3) Street nameplates shall wherever possible, be fixed on a building, boundary wall or fence adjacent to the street at a height of not less than 3 feet and not more than 12 feet above the road level, and preferably at a height of 8 feet. For the undermentioned reasons, however, the local authority shall be empowered either to modify these heights slightly or to arrange for the nameplates to be affixed to boards or posts if that is considered preferable:-
  - (i) To avoid a nameplate being overshadowed or obscured by trees, shrubs or by the architectural features or projecting parts of a building.
  - (ii) To avoid detracting from, distorting or modifying the architectural design of a building.
  - (iii) To avoid the prominence of nameplates being lessened by the proximity of illuminated or highly-coloured signs or advertisements.
  - (iv) Because of the presence of shop fronts.
  - (v) Where greater prominence could, with advantage, be secured by so doing.
- (4) Street nameplates shall be fixed so that they have, if possible, the benefit of street lighting. Where this is not practicable, nameplates at road intersections may be provided with independent lighting giving adequate illumination during the period of street lighting.
- (5) Nameplates shall be maintained in a clean and readable condition at all times.
- (6) Street nameplates shall be of uniform design throughout the Administrative County of London and shall be constructed as follows:-

- (i) Of durable, non-absorbent material.
  - (ii) The name shall be in black letters, not less than 4 inches and not more than 5 inches in height, on a white background.
- (7) The appropriate postal district shall be indicated in the nameplate in signal red.
  - (8) The name of the local authority may be included in the nameplate at the discretion of that authority and, if included, shall also be in signal red and shall be in upper and lower case letters, the upper case letters being not more than half the height of the letters of the street name.
  - (9) Supplementary lettering (such as “leading to...”), less than 4 inches in height, may be included in the nameplate.
  - (10) Each local authority may adopt its own individual style for lettering, provided a clear and legible style of good design is used.
  - (11) The margin between the lettering of the street name and the edge of the nameplate shall be not less than half the height of the street name letters.
  - (12) Reasonable abbreviations may be used at the discretion of the local authority, e.g., “Rd” and “Gdns”.
  - (13) Whenever the Council shall have approved or assigned the name of a street, the appropriate nameplate shall be exhibited within 60 days of the date of the notification of the Council’s decision to the local authority, unless the effective date of the Council’s decision is after the expiry of the 60 days, in which case the nameplate shall be displayed by the date on which the decision comes into force.
  - (14) The term “street” in these regulations shall be as defined in section 5 of the London Building Act, 1930.

Clerk of the London County Council

The County Hall, London, S.E.1.

Issued by the Greater London Council and is a reprint of publication No.3781 (1952) of the London County Council Applied to the area of the Greater London Council by Section 43 of the London Government Act 1963.

## **Department of Transport Circular No Roads 3/93 [edited in part]**

Dated December 15<sup>th</sup> 1993, and issued by the Department of Transport

- 1 This Circular supersedes Circular Roads 35/77 but does not place any new burdens on local authorities. It updates the advice given in that Circular on design and installation of street name plates and reminds authorities of the need to maintain regular contact with the Royal Mail on new or revised naming and numbering proposals.
- 2 Councils are asked to ensure that consultation takes place with the appropriate Royal Mail Postcode Centre at an early stage when considering new street naming and building numbering schemes. This is to allow the Postal Services adequate time to comment before agreement is given to a scheme and enables the Council to make changes to the proposals in the light of any representations received.
- 3 It is important to both the Royal Mail and the Emergency Services to avoid giving streets similar names within the same locality. The close juxtaposition of similar names such as Park Road, Park Avenue and Park Gate Drive in the same area has proved to be a particular source of difficulty. A great variety of "999" calls are received each day and some callers can be vague in the details they give. Where names are duplicated it can be extremely difficult to pinpoint an exact location in order to enable an ambulance to attend in the time allowed.
- 4 All authorities are reminded of the continuing need to maintain a good standard of street name plates and property numbering schemes and to improve existing standards where necessary. Both are essential for the efficient functioning of the Postal and Emergency Services as well as for the convenience and safety of the general public. It should be remembered that street names should be legible by night as well as by day. Adherence to the standards set out can help to achieve the maximum advantage from the expenditure undertaken.
- 5 The illustration of particular designs [below] is not intended to preclude the use of others which might be more suitable for a particular locality, but authorities are strongly recommended to adopt approximately the same ratio of legend to background and to avoid unduly thin lettering in order to ensure legibility. Good colour contrast is also important and combinations which are likely to be a particular problem for those who are colour blind should be avoided. It is not suggested that existing plates of character and distinction should be replaced. The aim should be to promote a good standard of design. This can be achieved by following the criteria set out.
- 6 Authorities are requested to keep the street name plates and building numbering schemes in their area under review and to ensure they are of a good standard. Street name plates at the junctions with main traffic routes should be given the first priority.



- 7 The relevant powers for local authorities are contained in Sections 64 and 65 of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, Sections 17-19 of the Public Health Act 1925, and for London Boroughs Part II of the London Building Act (Amendments) Act 1939, as superseded by Section 43 of the London Government Act 1963 and paragraph 14 to Schedule 8 of the Local Government Act 1985.
- 8 Could you bring this circular to the attention of the Chief Surveyor or Engineer and the Chief Financial Officer to your authority.

### **Recommendations for the installation of street name plates**

- 1 Street name plates should be fixed as near as possible to street corners, so as to be easily readable by drivers as well as pedestrians. The name plate should normally be within 3 metres of the intersection of the kerb lines, but where this is not practicable this may be varied up to a maximum of 6 metres.
- 2 Street name plates should be mounted so that the lower edge of the plate is approximately 1 metre above ground level at sites where they are unlikely to be obscured by pedestrians or vehicles and at approximately 2.5 metres where obstruction is a problem. They should never be lower than 0.6 metres or higher than 3.6 metres.
- 3 Name plates should normally be fixed at each street corner. At minor cross-roads, particularly in residential areas, one plate on each side of the street positioned on the offside of traffic emerging from the road may be sufficient, except where the road name changes or it is thought that paragraph 8 would apply. At major cross-roads, name plates will be necessary on both sides of each arm.
- 4 At T-junctions a main street name plate should be placed directly opposite the traffic approaching from the side road.
- 5 Where the street name changes at a point other than a cross road both names should be displayed at the point of change and many local authorities have found it useful to include arrows to indicate clearly to which part of the street the names refer.
- 6 On straight lengths of road without intersections name plates should be repeated at reasonable intervals with priority given to such places as bus and railway stations and opposite entrances to well frequented sites such as car parks.
- 7 Where two streets branch off obliquely from a common junction with a third street, plates on fingerpost mountings can be useful, provided they do not obscure any traffic sign.
- 8 Where it might reasonably be expected, for example at intervals on long straight lengths of road or at intersections or T-junctions, many local

authorities have found it useful to incorporate on the name plate information indicating the street numbers on either side of the intersection.

- 9 Whenever practical, street name plates should be mounted on walls, buildings or other boundary structures at the back of the footway. Post mounting or finger mounting should only be used where normal mounting does not make the plate conspicuous (e. g. where an important side road has a narrow entrance or in the exceptional circumstances mentioned in par. 7 above, or where it will frequently be obscured by pedestrian movement and cannot be mounted at the 2.5 metre height).
- 10 The name plates should be so fixed that there is a clear space of at least 300mm in every direction between them and any notices, advertisements or other printed or written matter. Where possible greater clearance should be provided. Nor should they be incorporated in other direction sign assemblies, but be kept distinct and mounted in as standardised a manner as possible. Care should be taken to keep the view of name plates free from obstruction by trees or other growth.
- 11 Where possible, name plates should be fixed so that they will be illuminated by light from street lamps, especially at important junctions, provided they remain visible to vehicles on the main carriageway.
- 12 Duplication of street names or nearly similar street names should be avoided within one postal area.

### **Recommendations for the design of street name plates**

- 1 Because street name plates are commonly viewed from an angle it is important that wide well-spaced lettering should be used.
- 2 Capital lettering should be used to avoid confusion with traffic signs, which generally employ lower case lettering
- 3 Figures (i)-(vi) illustrate suggested alphabets and designs. It should be noted that many serif alphabets do not perform well when used on reflectorised backgrounds. Authorities are recommended to employ “sans serif” lettering on reflectorised name plates. Figures (iii) and (iv) employ a “sans serif” Gill letter. Figures (v) and (vi) use the pre-1965 Revised Standard Transport Alphabet. Figure (vii) shows the Transport Heavy Alphabet which is in current use for black legends on traffic signs. The relationship of the stroke thickness to the letter height is shown in brackets. (It should be not more than 1:7 and not less than 1:4 to ensure adequate legibility). Figure (v) illustrates a street name plate with a “No Through Road” sign (diagram 816.1 in the Traffic Signs and General Directions 1981 (same number in the 1994 TSRGD). This sign may be used with any street name plate to indicate a no through road to vehicular traffic.

- 4 A 100mm actual capital letter height of lettering is the recommended standard for both the standard Transport and Transport Heavy Alphabets. With other alphabets with broader letter forms, 90mm may be used to reduce the length of the plate. Where fixing space is very restricted the design shown in Figure (vi) with either the Standard Transport or Transport Heavy Alphabets at 75mm letter height is preferable to using a 100mm alphabet with compressed letters and spacing. A 150mm letter height may be more appropriate on fast main roads.
- 5 Normally street name plates should have black lettering on a white background with a black border, as this gives the best contrast. Where coloured legends or backgrounds are used, a contrast ratio of at least 7:1 is required. The use of colour combinations with low contrast, for example bronze or brown lettering on green backgrounds, will result in poor legibility, especially under low pressure sodium lighting. The white background should be reflectorised wherever plates are likely to be viewed in the light from vehicle headlamps.
- 6 Only well known abbreviations should be used e. g. Ave., Cres., St, etc.
- 7 When streets have been re-named, the old name crossed out but clearly legible should remain for at least 1-2 years and then removed.
- 8 Only durable materials should be used for the construction of name plates and they should be maintained in a clean condition. Where a name plate is mounted on a specially provided post care should be taken to ensure that the appearance of the post and back of the plate are as pleasing and as unobtrusive as possible. Aircraft Grey No. 693 to BS381c has been found an unobtrusive colour in most environments when erecting traffic signs and can be applied to street name posts. Black may also be used if preferred.
- 9 Area colour coding by a background colour on the street name plate is not recommended. There is a loss of good contrast with many colour combinations. A coloured border may be a suitable alternative. Good contrast (a ratio of at least 1) is necessary if this is to be effective.
- 10 The chief aim of letter spacing is to give good legibility having regard to the letter form used. Spacing should be sufficient to prevent letters having a jumbled appearance when viewed from an oblique angle. The apparent area between successive letters should be as uniform as possible and this is affected by the shape of individual letters. Vertical strokes found in B, D, E etc. are those which need to be furthest apart.; the curves in B, C, D, G etc. permit a slight decrease in spacing; right angled letters, E, F, L etc. and sloping ones, A, K, V etc. can be closer still; some combinations such as LT, LY and VA can almost overlap.
- 11 The minimum spacing between words should be some 40-50 per cent of the letter height, dependent on the form of the terminal letters. The end spaces to the border should not be less than would apply if the border were the vertical stroke of an adjacent word, except that some reduction in end spaces may be

satisfactory if the line consists of a single word or is the longest line of several. Top and bottom borders should not be less than 50 per cent of the letter height, and spacing between the lines not less than 40 per cent of the letter height.

- 12 If district names are included on the name plate they should be shown in a smaller or reduced height of lettering. Figure (iv) gives an example.



FIG. I KINDERSLEY - 90



FIG. II KINDERSLEY - 90

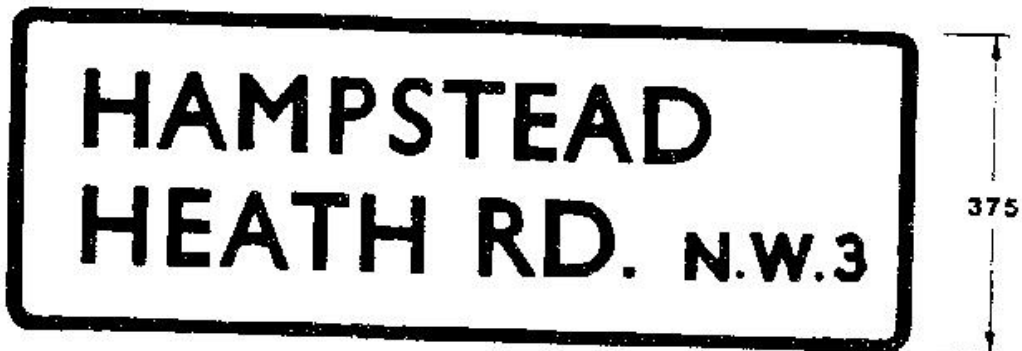


FIG. III GILL ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) - 90 & 50



FIG. IV GILL ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) - 90 & 50



FIG. V PRE-1965 REVISED STANDARD ( $\frac{1}{6}$ ) - 100 & 50



FIG. VI PRE-1965 REVISED STANDARD ( $\frac{1}{6}$ ) - 75 & 50



FIG. VII TRANSPORT HEAVY ( $\frac{1}{3.2}$ ) - 105 (related to 75 x-height)

all dimensions in millimetres

Study by : Hugh Collis  
Text by : Hugh Collis, Vincent Stops and Sarah Keay-Bright  
Lead member : Suzanne May OBE  
Published by : London Transport Users Committee, 6 Middle St.  
London EC1A 7JA

May 2003

ISBN 0 9511432 9 8

For additional copies of this report please contact:

Suzanne Fry, Phone 020 7505 9000, email [sfry@ltuc.org.uk](mailto:sfry@ltuc.org.uk)

The report is available on our web site: <http://www.ltuc.org.uk/>