

Wyre Forest District Council

# Street Naming & Property Numbering

## **Advice Policy**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 1974, the District Council has been responsible for street naming and property numbering. The power to name and number streets is given under the Public Health Act 1925 and the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847.

The Forward Planning Section of the Planning Health and Environment Division oversees street naming and numbering, whilst the Street Scene Section of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial services is responsible for the upkeep of street nameplates.

This advice policy sets out the District Council's powers and duties for undertaking street naming and numbering in the District. It also provides guidance to developers and building occupiers on the naming and numbering of streets and buildings within the Wyre Forest District.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The addressing of new properties is becoming an increasingly important issue within the District, particularly with the rise of many new large and infill housing developments within the urban areas. It is imperative that emergency service vehicles and the Royal Mail are able to locate new properties quickly and efficiently. Therefore the overall objective when undertaking street naming and numbering for new properties is to allocate unique and logical addresses.



*Britannia Gardens housing development off Watery Lane, Stourport-on-Severn.*

The District is primarily formed of mixed urban and rural areas. Postal numbering exists in the three towns of Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley as well as the larger villages such as Blakedown, Cookley and Wolverley. However, many of the rural areas consisting of small settlements and hamlets do not have postal numbering schemes and properties are identified by their names only.

### 3. Unique Property Reference Number

In addition to the traditional method of addressing a property the Government has introduced a British Standard (BS7666) for the precise identification of a property or plot of land. Work is progressing across the country on this initiative (called the National Land and Property Gazetteer or NLPG) and many properties already have a 12 digit Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) allocated. This permits additional information such as co-ordinates to be accessed, allowing the property to be precisely located on a map.

The District Council is committed to this initiative through the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), which will be used to centralise address management, maintenance and recording systems. This information will be used to improve the service to the public by reducing any ambiguity about properties and by updating numerous records simultaneously.

Alterations to this local data are regularly forwarded to the National Land and Property Gazetteer which is marketed commercially, so that benefits can be gained by the Royal Mail, Emergency Services and Utility Companies. As part of this process the location and naming of new streets is an essential starting point. Whilst this is strictly a District Council function any alterations to street names are notified to Worcestershire County Council who hold and maintain the Local Street Gazetteer as this information is essential for highway management responsibilities.

### 4. STATUTORY CONTEXT

The Council's powers in relation to street naming and property numbering are contained in two separate Acts. Wyre Forest District Council has the legal powers to authorise street names and numbers and to ensure that the authorised name and number is displayed in an appropriate manner.

**Sections 64 and 65, Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847 (TICA).** Sections 64 & 65, relating to street naming and numbering, are in force in the areas of all former boroughs and urban districts by incorporation in the Public Health Act, 1875, s.160. They also apply in the areas of all former rural districts by virtue of the Rural Districts (Urban Powers) Order, 1949. Thus, these provisions apply throughout Wyre Forest District. Section 64 and 65 TICA give the Council a discretionary power to cause houses and buildings in streets to be marked with such numbers as the Council thinks fit. This enables the Council to:

- Allocate numbers to new dwellings
- Change a street numbering scheme where expedient

Any references to street naming in TICA are no longer applicable to the Council since the Council has adopted Sections 17 – 19 of the Public Health Act 1925.

**Sections 17-19 Public Health Act 1925 (PHA).** The law with respect to the naming of streets and the numbering of houses is to be found in various statutes; the powers of particular local authorities depend upon whether or not particular provisions have been adopted. Wyre Forest District Council adopted sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act on 26 February 1992.

It is the Council's duty to have the name of every street painted or otherwise marked in a conspicuous position. This may be in the form of a free-standing street nameplate, or a sign painted or fixed to a building. The Council has a duty to renew the sign or nameplate as and when necessary (e.g. if it becomes illegible) by virtue of Section 19 PHA.

## **5. STREET NAMING**

### **When should developers apply for a new street name?**

The street naming process can take several months and it is therefore advisable to contact the Council at the earliest possible stage of the development. It should be noted that to avoid confusion consultation should take place before developers assign an unofficial marketing name to the development. Problems can arise if purchasers have bought those properties which have been marketed under an unofficial name and legal documentation has already been drafted. Developers should be wary of using a name for marketing purposes if it has not been authorised as a street name by the District Council.

Developers may put forward their proposals for new street names and these will be considered using the process outlined below.

### **Street Naming Procedure**

The District Council has a strict procedure for allocating new street names under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1925. Road naming powers under the Public Health Act 1925 have been delegated to the appropriate Council Officer after consultation with Ward Members. In addition, under the Wyre Forest Parish Charter formally adopted by Wyre Forest District Council on 28.09.95, the District Council is required to consult each Parish/Town Council routinely on street naming under clause 7.3. Generally speaking, the Council will implement a new street name for a development with a new access road consisting of five or more new properties.

- Upon receipt of notification that a new development is taking place (either directly from the developer or via Council Tax Section), the relevant planning application file is referred to. Copies of the site layout are taken.
- From the site plan, the number of new road names needed is devised.
- In the case of a road name proposed by the Developer, the Royal Mail will be consulted to establish whether the proposal is acceptable. The relevant local Ward Councillors and Town or Parish Council are then consulted. Councillors are asked to liaise with each other to either consider a name proposed by the developer or to decide amongst themselves on a new road

name or a theme for a larger development. Ward Councillors are normally given one month within which to decide upon new road names. Similarly, if a developer proposes a street name for their development, Council Members would be given an objection period of one month in accordance with Section 17 of the Public Health Act.

- Once agreement on a street name has been reached, Council Officers will allocate a numbering scheme and notify all relevant parties along with the developer.

### **Guidance for street naming**

The following is a list of guidelines to be followed when proposing new street names within the District:

- Proposals should not duplicate existing street names within the District. To prevent new road names which are close to, and may conflict with those in adjoining Districts, the Royal Mail will also be consulted.
- Avoid having two phonetically similar names within a postal area and, if possible within the District, for example Gibson Street and Gibson Close.
- Wherever possible a street name should have a proven historical connection to the land intended for development.
- Proposals relating to a person's name will not be permitted, unless there is a proven historical connection to the land intended for development or a proposal is put forward for commemorative purposes.
- Street names should not be difficult to pronounce or awkward to spell and aesthetically unsuitable names should be avoided.
- Street naming suffixes require careful consideration to avoid giving a false impression of location.



*Round Hill Wharf canalside housing development at Park Lane, Kidderminster..*

### **Property Naming**

The allocation of a house name is permitted where a numbering scheme is in place. This is under the condition that the name would be in addition to the existing house number and not a replacement. Furthermore, it is the individual's responsibility to notify other statutory undertakers, such as electricity, gas and water suppliers, after changing their house name. The original number should always be displayed on the property and quoted within the address on all correspondence. It is advisable, when considering a name for your property, to contact the District Council to determine whether the proposed name is already in use in the immediate area.

If a proposal to rename a dwelling within a rural area where there is no street numbering scheme in operation is received, it becomes necessary for the Council to have some intervention in the process. Such properties are identified by their names only, thus if two properties within the same lane, hamlet or area have a similar name this will cause serious postal confusion.

The Council is therefore required to check its records in order to ensure that there is not already an existing property of the same name within the immediate area. If there is, the owners requesting the change of name will be required to come up with an alternative name for their dwelling. Any information regarding alterations to addresses within those rural areas not subject to a street numbering scheme is always circulated on the Council's regular postal naming and numbering circular.

### **Street Nameplates**

Section 19 of the Public Health Act, 1925, places a duty on the local authority to see that street names are conspicuously indicated in or near the street. The Act also states that the initiative may come from the developer. The District Council therefore, will expect the developer to provide the initial nameplates for any new developments. A standard street nameplate specification is sent to the developers along with the proposed naming and numbering scheme for the new development. If a nameplate is broken or becomes illegible on an adopted highway the District Council's Street Scene Section will arrange to repair or replace it.

## **6. POSTAL NUMBERING**

Once new road names have been established, it is the District Council's responsibility to produce the numbering scheme for a new development, under Sections 64 and 65 of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act, 1847. This is undertaken by consulting the developer's plans and allocating each plot number a house number. Developers should note that only the District Council can issue the formal postal number and developers should not allocate their own numbering as part of their marketing strategy. Local Ward Members will be consulted on all developments of over ten dwellings and will receive the postal changes circular on a monthly basis for their information.

When numbering properties within new roads, the Council will usually adhere to the following conventions, as outlined in DETR Circ 3/93-govt advice:

- Street numbering schemes should allow for odd numbers on the left-hand side, and even numbers on the right.
- In small developments properties can be numbered consecutively, for example 1 – 5.
- For infill developments of one or two houses it may be necessary to use an alphabetical suffix, for example 9a.
- Succeeding numbers should be approximately opposite one another.
- Side roads should be numbered ascending from the main road.
- It is Council policy not to include number 13 within any new developments due to the number of complaints received.
- It should be noted that new properties are always numbered according to the street in which the main entrance is situated. The manipulation of numbering by developers or homeowners, in order to secure a perceived more prestigious address, will not be acceptable to the District Council.
- In blocks of flats each flat should be numbered so that the numbers run logically. The block may also be allocated a name. For example Flat 2, Blake House. The numbers of the flats contained in each block should be clearly displayed at the entrance in a position clearly readable from the roadside.



*Forge Court development of flats at Minster Road, Stourport-on-Severn.*

## **Proposals to alter existing street numbering scheme.**

The alteration of an existing street numbering scheme is a discretionary power of Council under s.64 of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act, 1847, and is considered as follows:

1. The Council is obliged to take account of the effect of alteration on statutory service providers (e.g. gas, electric and water), the emergency services and local residents.
2. The Council will only recognise an alteration to an existing street naming/numbering scheme in exceptional circumstances, where the proposed alteration is in the wider public interest, and not where it is only for the benefit of private individuals.
3. The proposed alteration of an existing approved scheme should take account of the Government's DETR Circular 3/93 advice for convention in street numbering.

4. The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed alteration is in the wider public interest. The pros and cons under the present system must be balanced with those of the proposed alteration. The ultimate question being “would the house be easier to find under the new scheme?”

## **Postal addresses for rural areas and barn conversions.**

New properties built in rural areas or barn conversions are usually identified by name only. Numbering schemes are often non-existent within the rural areas of the District. The Council will therefore, intervene in asking the property owners to allocate a name to the dwelling as soon as possible. Steps are taken as follows:

1. An officer undertakes a site visit to identify the exact location, orientation and accessibility of the new property.
2. A standard letter is distributed to the planning applicants, requesting their choice of name within two weeks of their receipt of the letter.
3. Upon receipt of the applicant's choice of name, the Council will check that there is no other property within the immediate area of the same name. If there is, the owners will be required to produce an alternative name.



*Traditional rural dwellings within Wyre Forest District.*

## **7. CIRCULATION OF NEW OR REVISED STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING INFORMATION**

The Forward Planning Section produces standard postal naming and numbering circulars on a monthly basis. These consist of written explanations and OS referencing for all new property naming and numbering that have been agreed by the Council within the District. They may also include formal confirmation of addresses following postal confusion and agreed changes to property names in those parts of the District where there is no street numbering. Location plans are also distributed with the postal circulars.

The circulars are currently distributed to a standard list of recipients for example the Royal Mail, Emergency Services, the Highway Authority, Utility Companies and the District Council's Council Tax and Electoral Sections. Postal Circulars are also electronically distributed to all Council Members for their information. The Council will send relevant extracts from the circular along with location plans, to developers and members of the public, to confirm the naming/numbering of their development, at their request.

It should be noted that under the new Mapping Service Agreement Terms that notification to the Royal Mail, Emergency Services and Utility Companies will be done centrally from the National Land Use Property Gazetteer hub. However, the District Council will still confirm new addresses to developers and householders.

## **8. ALLOCATION OF POSTCODES**

Postcodes identify a group of postal delivery points and are defined by the Royal Mail in order to facilitate the sorting and delivery of mail. The Royal Mail postcode centre based in Shrewsbury allocates a postcode to a new dwelling or other property upon the receipt of new naming and numbering information. Wyre Forest District Council therefore has no involvement in the allocation of property postcodes. If you are experiencing problems with your postcode or wish to obtain a new code, please contact the Royal Mail Customer Services on 08457 740740 or visit [www.royalmail.com](http://www.royalmail.com).

## **9. REFERENCES**

1. Public Health Act 1925, s.17-19. See Sweet & Maxwell's Highways Encyclopaedia, Vol.1, para.3-160.
2. Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, s. 64-65 *ibid.* Vol.4, par. 3-049.
3. Department of Environment Circular No. Roads 3/93 *ibid.* Vol.4, par. 6-1459.
4. British Standard BS 7666-3:2000. "Spatial data-sets for geographical referencing." Part 3 Specification for addresses." 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, September 2000.
5. The Wyre Forest Parish Charter, adopted 28.09.95. Wyre Forest District Council.