

Banners and Hanging Baskets on Lighting Columns

Banners and hanging baskets can add greatly to the appearance of towns and villages, and can play an important role in community life. If Town or Parish Councils are intending to attach banners or other items to street lighting columns they need to get permission.

What you need to consider

If your Council is considering attaching banners, signs or hanging baskets to street lighting columns, it is important to ensure the safety of the public, contractors and volunteers. It is also necessary to ensure those promoting and erecting banners and decorations do not leave themselves open to prosecution or legal claims because of their actions, which may have been carried out with the best of intentions.

Many of the county's lighting columns are old and are reaching the end of their life. They were not usually designed to take banners and fixtures, which can exert considerable additional weight and wind loading, potentially resulting in catastrophic failure with consequent damage to property or injury to the public.

The condition of the Council's lighting columns is monitored, and those most at risk are tested annually. In some cases where there is a concern about their safety columns may need to be removed immediately for replacement later.

What you need to do

In order to ensure the safety of any banners or hanging baskets you are considering installing, there are a few safety and legal procedures you will need to follow;

- Get permission of the owners of any street lighting columns (usually Wiltshire Council), and confirmation that it is capable of taking the additional loading.
- Get specific permission for any decorations or banners overhanging the road or footway.
- Have adequate public liability insurance, and use suitable contractors.
- You should also check that you do not need planning permission or other approvals.

It is important to apply as early as possible as the particular column you propose to use may not have sufficient strength for the proposed loading, and alternatives may need to be considered.

Permission to attach Banners or Hanging Baskets to Lighting Columns

Most lighting columns have limited capability for taking the additional loading caused by banners, signs or hanging baskets. They may not be able to take the proposed additional loading.

The first stage is to seek the permission of the owners of the street lighting columns to attach decorations. This is usually Wiltshire Council, but in some cases it could be another organisation. This is particularly important if you intend to use a column to supply electricity to the attachments.

If it is intended to attach banners, signs or hanging baskets to street lighting columns owned by Wiltshire Council, it will be necessary for this Council to check that the column is capable of safely taking the additional loading before giving approval to attach them.

In order to determine whether a particular column is safe to take the proposed additional loading caused by a banner, sign or hanging basket, it is necessary to know specific information about the banner including:

- Dimensions and weight of banner or baskets,
- Height from the ground of proposed fixings or attachment,
- Technical details of fixing, including dimensions and details of any spring or similar mechanism.

This information will be used to consult the column manufacturer about the ability of the column to take the proposed additional loading where this is possible. It may be necessary to carry out physical testing to establish the strength of the column. If there is any doubt about the ability of the column to take the additional loading it will be necessary to refuse permission.

Hanging baskets are more likely than to banners to meet the loading requirements. Single arm hanging baskets are worse than double arm arrangements because of the creation of a bending moment in the column. Baskets that wrap round the column are the best solution.

It may not be possible to give permission to attach banners, signs or hanging baskets because the design or the condition of a particular column is not suitable.

In some cases there may be advantages in using temporary posts set in sockets in the ground, especially for holding hanging baskets, rather than using lamp columns.

There is a real risk of columns failing if they are subjected to excessive loading. The safety of the public has to be a priority, and it is important to be aware of the potential legal and financial implications for organisations in the event of an incident.

A form '**Application to attach banners and decorations to lighting columns**' is available on the Council's website under the 'Street lights' section at the following location:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streets>

This will enable consideration to be given to the proposal. Where aging columns are going to be replaced in locations where banners or hanging baskets have been requested, it may be possible for the replacement column to be designed to be capable of taking an additional loading.

Permission for any decorations or banners overhanging roads or footways

The Highways Act (section 178) requires you to have a licence to place banners and similar decorations over the road.

Height Clearance above Footways and Verges

All attachments must usually be at least 2.3m above footways to the underside of any attachment, such as a decoration or sign protruding from the column.

A greater clearance may be better to avoid the risk of damage or vandalism, but may add to the wind loading on the column.

Height Clearance above Carriageways

There must be a minimum clearance of 5.8 metres above a road (7.5 metres on abnormal load routes).

Have Public Liability Insurance

You will need to provide evidence of your public liability insurance. You should also discuss your proposals with the insurance company to ensure your cover is adequate for the works you are undertaking.

You will have to agree to indemnify the Council against any claims, costs and proceedings, howsoever arising, as a result of the erection, retention, maintenance and removal of the banner, sign or hanging basket. You will need to provide evidence of Public Liability Insurance cover of up to £5 million for any one incident.

Copies of the insurance must be submitted with the application.

Use Suitable Contractors

Installation of banners, signs and hanging baskets on the Council's street lights must not be started until approval for the installation has been given by Wiltshire Council.

No ladders are to be placed in contact with or leant against the lighting columns as part of the installation process. Suitable contractors will be aware of the issues of working at heights.

The installer may have to make arrangements with Wiltshire Council as highway authority and the police if traffic management is required during installation.

The applicant is responsible for installing, maintaining and removing the banner, signs or hanging basket. The promoter will be responsible for the safety of any fixtures, attachments and other arrangements.

Wiltshire Council may arrange for its own contractors to make safety checks of attachments and fixings, but responsibility for the safety of them remains with those installing and maintaining them.

Wiltshire Council may remove any banners, signs or hanging baskets attached to lighting columns which in their opinion are unsafe or dangerous to the general public and these costs will be recharged to the applicant.

Renewal of Permissions

The permission to attach banners to lighting columns needs to be renewed annually because the condition of the columns deteriorate as they age, and the safety of the column needs to be considered on a regular basis. Usually renewing the permission will not be a problem unless the condition of the column has deteriorated or circumstances.

If it is not possible to renew permission for any reason the applicant will be responsible for removing immediately.

Application

A form '**Section 178 Application Form**' is available on the Council's website under the 'Street lights' section at the following location:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streets>

What next?

If you do want to attach banners or decorations to the Council's street lights:

- Complete the '**Application to attach banners and decorations to lighting columns**'.
- Complete the '**Section 178 Application Form**' if decorations are above the highway.
- Sign the forms and return them to the address below (or scan and email) together with a copy of the insurance and other supporting information such as location plans, technical details, electrical accreditation and certification if relevant.

Wiltshire Council will endeavour to grant the necessary approvals as soon as possible, but we may get back to you if there are any queries.

Please print the application form, sign and return with copy of insurance certificate to:

Streetworks Team
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Or email scanned version to:

streetworks@wiltshire.gov.uk

Need any help?

Wiltshire Council's street lighting is managed by Atkins.

If you have any questions about attaching banners signs or hanging baskets to street lighting columns please email:

streetlightinginwiltshire@atkinsglobal.com

Or write to:

Atkins
3rd Floor
County Gate
County Way,
Trowbridge
BA14 7FJ

Further Reading

PLG 06 Guidance on installation and maintenance of seasonal decorations and lighting column attachments – Published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals