



*Basingstoke
and Deane*

Planning and Telecommunications

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Approach

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council is the local planning authority responsible for making planning decisions on telecommunications (telecoms) equipment in the Borough.

We are keen to encourage a joint working approach to telecoms development with everyone concerned. They would be involved in a process that ultimately raises the level of consensus about the type, and location, of telecoms equipment. The five main operators and various local action groups have

worked with us. Together we have developed an approach that ensures the maximum amount of information about the possible location of telecoms equipment is made public, and debated as soon as is practicable (see section below on consultation arrangements and contact details). The operators have made a commitment to provide local planning authorities with annual rollout plans for each area. These indicate where new installations are required. This has enabled the joint production of an overview plan, showing all the potential

areas of search from the five main operators in Basingstoke and Deane.

The overview plan, and this leaflet, represent our commitment to a joint solution to telecoms in the Borough. It will show the areas of search, and give background information on how we and the public can influence telecommunications within our Borough.

What is Telecoms Equipment?

Radio base stations transmit and receive radio signals to and from mobile phones. Each base station comprises radio equipment that is housed in a cabinet and antennas (which can be mounted either on freestanding structures or on existing buildings and structures). The structures used to support the antennas vary in size and design, depending on such factors

as the amount of equipment they need to support, their required height, and setting. The antennas often need to be at a minimum height, hence their location on rooftops or masts (e.g. lattice tower masts). Some smaller masts have been designed to be less intrusive (for example, resembling lamp-posts, telegraph poles and trees).



Need and Demand - an Overview

The rapid growth in mobile communications has resulted in at least 43 million users of mobile phones in the UK. Customer demand has necessitated upgrading the technology, with operators having to continually expand their networks to accommodate services and improve quality.

Five UK operators also now have licences to provide a 'Third Generation' (3G) service that will allow enhanced services for mobile phone users, such as higher quality internet access. This means more sites are needed in the Borough. Under the terms of their licences, the operators must provide a network covering 80% of the population by 2007.

The area of coverage of the base stations varies, depending on a number of factors, one being the amount of mobile phone usage. More base stations are therefore needed where there is a high density of mobile phone users, such as in urban areas.

Government Policy

Policy framework

The Government's policy framework for telecommunications development is set out within Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (PPG8). PPG8 outlines the importance of good communications, both economically and socially. It sets out the Government's policy to facilitate the growth of new and existing

telecommunications systems, whilst minimising the environmental impact of any installation.

Local Planning Authorities are, therefore, required to respond positively to proposals for telecommunications development, and not question the need for the equipment, in principle, or obstruct the competitiveness

of operators. The benefits of an efficient telecommunications service are recognised within the Hampshire County Structure Plan, and our Local Plan. These support new development, provided the visual impact of the structures is minimised, and the character of the countryside preserved.

Environmental Considerations

Mast and site sharing

Mast and site sharing is strongly encouraged where this will result in the least visual intrusion. The sharing of an existing mast usually requires it to be increased in height or structural capacity, which could increase its visibility. Therefore, the provision of two or more masts on the same site (co-location), utilising existing screening, may be less visually intrusive.

As far as possible, existing buildings and structures (such

as electricity pylons) will be used for siting new antennas. The overview plan will enable us to work with the operators, to co-ordinate the siting of new development, and minimise the number of new sites in the Borough.

Siting and Appearance

The impact of any installation on the environment will be minimised through sympathetic design, camouflage and appropriate screening. Alternative designs, materials, colouring and siting will be explored, to

ensure that any development has the least visual impact.

The Government gives high priority to the protection of rural and urban areas covered by environmental or historical designations, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and listed buildings. The impact of telecommunications installations on these protected areas should, therefore, take into account advice provided in other planning policy guidance notes, to preserve their quality and character.

Health Considerations

The Stewart Report

Following research by an independent group of experts into the possible health effects posed by mobile phones, and base stations, the Stewart Report concluded that:

"the balance of evidence indicates that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations, on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of the guidelines. However, there

can be indirect adverse effects on their well-being in some cases".

Gaps in scientific knowledge led the Stewart Report to recommend a precautionary approach to the use of mobile phone technologies. Any elements of the precautionary principle found in the Stewart Report have been taken into account in PPG8, and the Local Planning Authority is not supposed to adopt any further 'precautions'.

Government Guidance

PPG8 sets out very clearly the Government's view on public health concerns about telecommunications masts, and the approach that local planning authorities should take in this respect:

"Health considerations and public concern can, in principle, be material considerations in determining applications for planning permission and prior approval. Whether such matters are material in a particular case is ultimately a

matter for the courts. It is for the decision-maker (usually the local planning authority) to determine what weight to attach to such considerations in any particular case" (para 29).

"However, it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a

local planning authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them" (para 98).

"All new mobile phone base stations are expected to meet the ICNIRP guidelines. However, all applicants should include with their applications, a statement that self-certifies to the effect that the mobile phone base station, when operational, will meet the guidelines...Where a mobile phone base station is added to an existing mast or site, the operator should confirm that the cumulative exposure will not exceed the ICNIRP guidelines"(para 99).



Types of Applications

There are two types of applications determined by the Borough Council:

1. Prior Approval Applications

Certain telecommunications development does not require planning permission, being permitted under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). For example, this includes masts less than 15m in height that are on the ground. However,

this is conditional upon the operator making a prior approval application to the local planning authority. Such an application will allow the local planning authority to consider (strictly within 56 days) the siting and appearance only of the proposed development.

2. Full Planning Permission

Larger installations require an application for planning permission, and these will be determined in accordance with the development plan,

unless material considerations (see section below) indicate otherwise. This includes masts within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or a Conservation Area.

The usual time frame for planning applications apply (eight week target). Planning authorities should consider any technical constraints on the location and proposed development that may affect the operation or effectiveness of the equipment.

Consultation Arrangements

Pre-application consultation

PPG8 advises that the operators should carry out pre-application discussions with the local authority, and other organisations with an interest in the proposed development. The submission to the Council of each operator's annual rollout plans for future developments, leads to the production of the overview plan. This means that any technical and environmental constraints, and alternative approaches, can be discussed at the earliest opportunity. The overview plan is available for viewing at the Civic Offices, and comments on this can be made to the operators (contact details below).

The onus is on the telecommunications operators to consult residential and amenity groups, prior to the submission of a planning application. The telecommunications operators have developed ten commitments to address community concerns, including, improved

consultation with local residents about new developments. The amount and type of consultation will vary with each site, based on an evaluation system for assessing the sensitivity of any installation. This includes the proximity to residential properties and schools, and the impact on the environment. This is known as the 'traffic light ratings model'. A green rating suggests there are few concerns, whereas a red rating highlights that there are several. Further information on this can be obtained by contacting the Mobile Operators Association or any of the operators (contact details below).

On receipt of an application

The Council is obliged to deal with any application that is submitted. We are keen to give local residents, and amenity groups, the opportunity to express their views on any proposal. When the Council receives an application for prior approval or full planning consent:

- the application will be listed in the weekly list of applications;
- we will consult the head of governors of any school and all neighbours within 100m of the application site;
- a site notice will be displayed;
- we will advertise in the local press, in certain circumstances, (for example, for sites over a certain size or affecting a public right of way).

These consultations exceed the statutory requirements.

How Does the Council Determine an Application?

The decision on any application will be in accordance with government policy and advice (outlined above), taking into account

environmental and other considerations. Relevant material considerations may include the impact of any installation on highway

safety, and the protection of trees. The impact of such development on property values is not a matter for the planning system.

Other Information

The Human Rights Act (2000) is taken into account in all decisions made by the Local Planning Authority, in particular Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (Right to Respect For Private and Family Life) and Article 1 of the 1st Protocol (Protection of Property).

Whilst these rights are recognised, they are not absolute and do have limitations. One limitation is that the Articles are subject (so far as is necessary in a democratic society) to the interest of (for example) the economic well-being of the country, and the public

interest. The Local Planning Authority must, therefore, balance respect for the individual's family home and property with the economic well-being of the country and the public interest.



Further Contact Points

Planning and Transport,

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council: Queries relating to permitted development/planning applications:

Ailith Rutt,

tel: 01256 845559

a.rutt@basingstoke.gov.uk

Policy queries:

Anne Shattock,

tel: 01256 845464

a.shattock@basingstoke.gov.uk

Department of Health

leaflet on mobile phones and base stations:
www.dh.gov.uk

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

planning policy and information on mobile phone base stations:
www.odpm.gov.uk

Office of Communications (Ofcom)

(which has taken over the role of the Radiocommunications Agency):
www.ofcom.org.uk

Mobile Operators Association (MOA)

(formerly Federation of the Electronics Industry), Russell Square House, 10-12 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5EE,
www.mobilemastinfo.com (includes details of the Traffic Light Ratings Model),
tel: 020 7331 2015 or 2047, info@ukmoa.org

The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB),

the Government's statutory advisors on radiological protection matters: www.nrpb.org.uk, **tel: 01235 831600**

Mast Action UK

PO Box 312, Hertfordshire, EN7 5ZE,
www.mastaction.co.uk

Campaign for Planning Sanity

www.planningsanity.co.uk
email: info@planningsanity.co.uk
Helpline: 0161 278 3355

Mast Sanity

www.mastsanity.org
email: webmaster@mastsanity.org
Helpline: 08704 322377

Powerwatch

www.powerwatch.org.uk

Telecommunications Operators

3: Regional Planning & Environmental Controller,
tel: 0845 604 3000

Airwave: John Scott, Pentland Ltd (Agents for Airwave),
j.scott@pentlandltd.co.uk

02:
tel: 0113 3886780

Orange:
tel: 0800 7835021

T-mobile:
tel: 0870 321 6047,
networkinfo@t-mobile.co.uk

Vodafone:
tel: 01635 676457,
environment.planning@vf.vodafone.co.uk

An excellent Borough - together we can be even better!

