



Best Practice in Planning Guidance Note 10

Mobile Telecommunications Masts Procedure Notes for Guidance
(Written May 2000 – updated February 2004 and currently under review)

1 Introduction

1.1 The objective of this Planning Guidance Note is to develop an understanding between the telecommunications systems operators and the Council as to what is expected from both parties in the consideration of proposals for telecommunications masts. The Council will consider such proposals having regard to the justification on telecommunication grounds, the impact on visual amenity and residential amenity and compliance with the Council's relevant policies contained in the Chichester District Local Plan First Review 1999. The advice contained in this Guidance Note is in line with Government guidance; PPG8 "Telecommunications", Circular 4/99, "Planning for Telecommunications" and the Code of Best Practice "Telecommunications Prior Procedures as applied to mast/tower development". For more information please consult the "Code of Best Practice" at www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/advice.htm.

2 Pre-application Discussions

2.1 It is important that telecommunications code system operators contact the Council about future development **prior to the formal submission of proposals**. Pre-application discussions are important elements within the overall process of considering proposals and can reduce delays and avoid possible refusals of permission at the formal application stage. Such pre-application discussions are encouraged by Government guidance.

2.2 Information provided at pre-application stage should preferably include:

- Details of the external appearance and exact siting of the proposal together with evidence of need.
- Plans showing the code operator's existing and proposed cell coverage including all existing and proposed installations (these plans should cover the Chichester District and those parts of adjacent districts which abut).
- Evidence that, when new masts are proposed, sharing of existing masts or siting on buildings or other structures (such as pylons) has been considered and why, if such opportunities exist and are not proposed they are not feasible options. The Council encourages mast sharing where appropriate.
- Operators are encouraged to offer to undertake an appropriate temporary mast demonstration facility to help assess the impact of new proposals upon the surrounding environment.

2.3 The Council has a referenced plan and schedule of all approved masts (with major mast installations) in the District, which may help operators in their search for appropriate sites. Operators can also use the Radio Sites Databank, operated by the telecommunications industry and the Register of Masts Sites (Radio Communications Agency).

2.4 The Council can only provide informal advice at pre-application stage. However, comprehensive information should be provided at this stage to enable more informed comments to be made. All discussions at this stage with the Council will be undertaken on a confidential basis. In addition to consultation with the Council, Operators may find it useful to contact representative bodies such as:

- the relevant Parish Council,
- if within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, either the Sussex Downs Conservation Board (Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or the Chichester Harbour Conservancy (Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and
- if near or in a SSSI, English Nature.

2.5 This can, again, reduce unnecessary delays at application stage and could assist in gauging possible interest in the proposal.

3. Permitted Development Rights/need for express grant of Planning Permission

3.1 Under Part 24, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995, operators have the right to erect a ground based mast of up to 15m in height. This does not apply on article 1(5) land (i.e. including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas) or land which is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, where a full application for planning permission is required. The existence of significant areas of 1(5) land means that within the majority of Chichester District a planning application will need to be made.

3.2 Under paragraph A.2 (4) and A.2 (4A), certain development permitted under Part 24 is conditional upon the Operator making an application to determine whether prior approval will be required for the siting and appearance of the development. Such an application will allow the Council to consider, within the specified time period of 56 days, the siting and appearance of the proposed development and determine whether prior approval is required. The District Council can subsequently grant or refuse such approval.

3.3 Circular 4/99 “Planning for Telecommunications” contains detailed advice on Government policy, procedural guidance and summarises the main permitted development rights.

4. Checklist for applicants/agents

4.1 When submitting an application for prior approval or planning permission to the Council the following documents should be included:

- A written description of the proposed development.
- Plans showing the proposed location, appearance and format of installation

(including equipment cabin and compound).

- The appropriate fee.

4.2 In addition to this, the following are required in order for the Council to fully assess the application:

- A demonstration, through submission of cell coverage plans of the need for the installation. A plan showing existing, permitted and planned masts (including adjoining District/Boroughs where appropriate).
- Demonstration through the submission of cell coverage plans and a supporting statement that available alternative sites, including buildings and other structures, have been considered. This evidence should include details of all existing (not just of operator concerned) and proposed installations and should be inclusive of installations within adjoining Districts/Boroughs.
- Supporting statement as to the attributes of the preferred site, reason for its choice and cell coverage plan indicating proposed coverage.
- A statement to indicate how the preferred site is designed to minimise environmental intrusion including landscape considerations (eg is it within woodland or designed to be sympathetic to its surroundings).
- An indication in writing that the applicant has ensured the location and design of the proposal is not likely to cause radio interference with other electrical equipment.
- Details of the means of access to the site, and the method of providing an electricity supply to the installation.
- Operators are advised to ensure that quoted height dimensions are taken from ground level to include any concrete base.

4.3 A demonstration by means of an appropriate temporary installation may be required if thought necessary by the case officer at the proposed site of a mast/tower to indicate the height of the proposal (such display to be by prior arrangement with the case officer dealing with the application).

5. Assessing Environmental Impact

There are particular criteria which the District Council will consider in relation to applications for masts.

5.1 Under Part 24, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, specific advice is given as to the matters which should be taken into account. The Council will consider siting and external appearance when applications are received. Factors such as materials, colour and design are important in this respect — the use of appropriate materials and colours may allow a mast to blend more easily into its surroundings. Other considerations include dimensions (not just height), overall shape, mass and availability of alternative designs and landscaping (the boundaries of an application site should be large enough to incorporate landscaping).

5.2 Other factors relating specifically to siting may include:

- The height of the site in relation to surrounding land;
- The existence of topographical features and natural vegetation;
- The effect on the skyline or horizon;

- The site when observed from all surrounding viewpoints (eg public footpaths, highways etc), including from outside the authority's own area;
- The site in relation to areas designated locally for their scenic or conservation value;
- The site in relation to existing masts, structures or buildings, including buildings of a historical or traditional character; and
- The site in relation to residential property. (Circular 4/99).

5.3 Applicants are advised to refer to Local Plan Policy RE29, which sets out the circumstances in which planning permission would be granted and applicants are advised to address the seven tests as part of their submission.

6. Health Implications

6.1 The health effects of mobile phones and TETRA masts is controversial.

Concerns about the health implications fall into two areas; the actual and perceived risk to health. The government advice in PPG8 is that currently there is no evidence of significant adverse health effects from electro-magnetic fields. The government cannot however, say that these systems are safe and research is continuing. The health effects are disputed by pressure groups such as 'Save Sussex From TETRA'.

The Council is mindful of public fears over the health risks and where appropriate we will take these concerns into account and balance this with the government support for telecommunications development.

7. Independent technical approval

7.1 Where full planning applications are received, all of the above considerations will be taken into account. However, in certain cases, independent technical advice may be sought before determining an application.

8. Mast Sharing opportunities

8.1 Where appropriate, the Council will encourage mast sharing in particular where new masts are proposed and will encourage the design of a new mast to incorporate capacity for sharing. In accordance with Local Plan Policy RE29, the District Council will expect operators to have explored mast sharing possibilities. In addition, new masts should incorporate, where appropriate, opportunities for sharing.

9. Appearance of mast

9.1 A substantial part of the Chichester District is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and operators must ensure that if it is absolutely necessary to locate new masts/towers in these areas, that they are of an appropriate design and scale and sited as sympathetically as possible in the landscape. For example, masts should be an appropriate colour relevant to their setting. Siting is generally preferred in woodland rather than in isolated locations with little existing screening and on hillsides rather than hilltops.

10. Other matters

10.1 Government advice (PPG8, paragraph33) encourages District Planning Authorities to identify existing and potential sites and in this respect it may be that in certain instances, Council owned land may be available for the siting of telecommunications equipment. Operators may wish to make further enquiries of the Estates Section of the Council.

10.2 The District Council's Economic Development Office is in contact with businesses throughout the District and may be aware of site opportunities. Operators may wish to make further enquiries to the Economic Development Office.

10.3 Should an available site be identified, Operators should then follow the advice in this Guidance Note to establish the planning merits of the proposal.

Contacts:

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<p>Sussex Downs Conservation Board</p>		<p>Chanctonbury House Church Street Storrington West Sussex</p>
<p>Chichester Harbour Conservancy</p>		<p>County Hall West Street Chichester West Sussex</p>
<p>Radio Communications Agency</p>		<p>Waterloo Bridge House Waterloo Bridge Road London SE1 8UA</p> <p>New Kingsbeam House 22 Upper Grounds Blackfriars London SE1 9SA</p>
<p>National Radiological Protection Board</p>		<p>Chilton Didcot Oxon OX11 0RQ</p>
<p>Health & Safety Executive</p>		<p>Priestley House Priestley Road Basingstoke RE24 9NW</p>
<p>Civil Aviation Authority</p>		<p>AS3 (Safeguarding) Aviation House 129 Kingsway London WC2B 6NN</p>
<p>English Nature</p>		<p>SE England Region Sub Regional Office Howard House 31 High Street Lewes East Sussex BN7 2LU</p>
<p>Sitefinder web site</p>		<p>http://www.sitefinder.radio.gov.uk/</p>