

Further Information

If you need further information about Telecommunications development, the following contacts may be of interest:

Department of Health

Website: www.dh.gov.uk

Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones

Website: www.iegmp.org.uk

Department of Education and Employment

Website: www.teachernet.gov.uk

Health Protection Agency

Website: www.hpa.org.uk/radiation

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Website: www.odpm.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7944 4400

UK Regulator of the Telecoms Industry

Website: www.ofcom.org.uk

Tel: 020 7981 3040

Office of the Telecoms Ombudsman

Website: www.otelo.org.uk

Tel: 0845 050 1614

Other Useful Publications & Leaflets

- Mobile Phone Base Stations and Health
(Published by the Department of Health)

Planning Services

Hastings Borough Council
Muriel Matter House
Breeds Place
Hastings TN34 3UY

Tel: 01424 451090

Website: www.hastings.gov.uk

Email: dcenquiries@hastings.gov.uk

TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

Regeneration & Planning



Contact details update April 2018 but content not reviewed since first publication in June 2006

Introduction

The Government has granted Licences to a number of major mobile telephone companies to provide a service to their customers covering much of England and Wales. These companies are called 'Telecommunications Code Systems Operators' and in order to ensure that the companies can achieve the targets set by the government, regulations guiding the erection of all masts, antennas, dishes and equipment cabinets are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(Amendment) Order 2001 (the GPDO). This gives wide ranging authority, called 'Permitted Development' rights, to the operators to carry out their operational development without the need for planning permission.

Some controls over such development are built in to the GPDO so that operators must give us an opportunity to consider their proposals. The operators generally discuss their requirements with our officers before any formal submission is made. They have all signed up to a Code of Practice under which they review all potential sites and grade them according to a 'traffic light' model taking into account the circumstances of each case. Matters which are taken into account include proximity to schools and houses.



Health

We cannot question the need for any particular telecommunications development, nor can it take into account issues of public health. The government has been quite specific about this. They have published Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (PPG8), which states, among other matters :-

'Health considerations and public concern can in principle be material considerations in determining applications for planning permission and for prior approval. Whether such matters are material in a particular case is ultimately a matter for the courts. It is for the decision-maker to determine what weight to attach to such considerations in any particular case.'

'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 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.'

The ICNIRP referred to is the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection, and the commission has set down safe limits for radiation emissions. Every Code System Operator is required to meet this standard and every submission to us is required to contain a formal statement of compliance with the standard.

You might have heard about the 'Stewart Report' into 'mobile phones and health'. This was commissioned by the Government who accepted the precautionary approach recommended therein but only to a limited extent. In PPG8 the Government states that the report does not provide any basis for precautionary actions beyond those already proposed. In the Government's view, local planning authorities should not implement their own precautionary policies eg by way of imposing a ban or moratorium on new telecommunications development or insisting on minimum distances between new telecommunications development and existing development.

Planning Permission and Prior Approval

The need for 'Prior Approval' arises where the proposal meets the 'Permitted Development' criteria and in such cases the operator has to give us notice of his intention to carry out the work. We have to respond within a certain period, either indicating that Prior Approval is not necessary, or to require the submission of a formal planning application. We must take account of any representations received from the consultations carried out with local residents and other groups. It has to be emphasised, however, that in the majority of cases, there are no grounds on which we can raise objections, and where there are objections these can only be under the headings of 'siting' or 'design'.

Policy DG28 of the Hastings Local Plan 2004 states that Prior Approval will be given provided that matters of appearance, design and landscape have been adequately considered and that there is no realistic prospect of a visually less unobtrusive location, given technical constraints.

Planning permission is always required where the installation exceeds 15 metres in height and in a number of other specific instances, and we can, and have, refused applications where there are clear reasons to do so.

We encourage several operators to share masts. There are several major telecommunications masts in Hastings and St Leonards and a number of principal buildings also have several operators' antennas on them. Having said this, however, many people will have noticed the increase in smaller monopole masts sited on public footways and in the public domain. This is due to the increased complexity of the Third Generation mobile phone network which has tighter 'cells' and a narrower operating bandwidth. This means in practice that a relatively higher number of such smaller masts is needed, and almost all of these are 'permitted development'.