

Frequently Asked Questions About Telecommunications Development

What are telecommunications developments?

Telecommunications developments are primarily developed by the current mobile phone operators and are usually in the form of masts or antennae. They include large towers, (similar to small electricity pylons), monopoles, (often located at the side of the road and similar to tall street lights) and smaller antennae often attached to existing buildings or structures. They normally also involve the erection of cabinets which house the necessary radio equipment.

Do all telecommunications developments require permission from the City Council?

Some developments (most roof mounted antennae or antennae attached to existing masts) do not require any permission from the City Council, though it is good practice for the operators to notify the City Council where they intend to install such equipment. New masts up to 15 metres in height generally do not require full planning permission but the operators must apply for 'prior approval' to the City Council. In 'prior approval' cases the Council can consider only the siting and appearance of the equipment and must do so within 56 days. Installations above 15 metres and larger masts on existing structures will require full planning permission.

How can I find out about any proposals for mobile phone masts near to me?

A list of all new applications (for all developments, not only telecommunications) is published every week on the City Council's website and is also available in libraries and at the Development Enquiry Centre. The City Council publicises applications for telecommunications developments requiring planning permission or 'prior approval' by the use of site notices close to the proposed development. Each autumn, the City Council discusses with each operator their proposals for development in the following year (known as 'roll-out' plans). The roll-out plans are available for you to view.

What are the main issues in deciding on an application for this type of development?

The City Council must take into account Central Government guidance contained within Planning Policy Guidance Note 8: Telecommunications, and local policy contained within the City Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Government policy seeks to achieve a balance between facilitating the growth of telecommunications systems and keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The need to keep the environmental impact to a minimum is reflected in City Council policy contained in the UDP. As such operators are encouraged where possible to share existing masts and sites with other operators so that new masts are less necessary. In dealing with applications for telecommunications development the Council can take the following matters into account:

- Impact on visual amenity and the character of the area.
- Any impact on the character of a conservation area or a listed building.
- Impact on sensitive locations including green belt locations.
- The cumulative visual impact of antennae sharing a mast, of masts sharing a site, or of masts within a locality.
- The potential for site sharing or for locating antennae on existing buildings or structures.

How do I comment on applications for mobile phone masts?

The City Council publicises all planning applications and 'prior approval' applications by notices displayed on or near to the site. Comments to the Council on such applications should be made in writing within 21 days.

Can I object to a mobile phone mast because of concerns over health impact?

Not usually. Whilst health considerations can be material considerations in determining applications for telecommunications development, Central Government has stated that it should remain the responsibility of the Government to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health and that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. However, the Government does encourage that applications for such installations be accompanied by a certificate to show that the installation would comply with the guidelines set out by the International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). Should this Certificate be provided then national policy indicates that it should not be necessary for Local Planning Authorities to consider health matters further.

Can I find out where existing telecommunications masts or antennae are near to my home or work?

Yes. The website www.sitefinder.radio.gov.uk provided by OFCOM (Office of Communications) allows you to search by postcode or area for existing masts/antennae in any given area in the UK. It will also give information including size and the company for each site.

How can I find out more?

Further information on this subject can be gained from the following sources'.

- Leeds Unitary Development Plan, Volume 2 (2001)
- Leeds City Council – Telecommunications Development Information Sheet (2005)
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 – Telecommunications (2001)
- DTLR Circular 4/99 Planning for Telecommunications
- Part 24 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Amendment) (England) Order 2001
- Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development (2002)
- Mobile Phones and Health (The Stewart Report). Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (2000)
- AGNIR report into the Stewart Report (December 2003)
- Mobile Phones and Health (Department of Health leaflet, 2000)
- Mobile phone base stations and health (Department of Health leaflet, 2000)

Or via the following web sites.

www.leeds.gov.uk (Leeds City Council website)
www.planning.odpm.gov.uk (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)
www.planningportal.com (Planning Portal)
www.mobilemanifesto.com (Mobile Operators Association)
www.iegmp.org.uk (Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones)
www.nrpb.org.uk (National Radiological Protection Board)
www.doh.gov.uk (Department of Health)
www.hpa.org.uk (Health Protection Agency)
www.ofcom.org.uk (Office of Communications)
www.sitefinderradio.gov.uk (Look for masts in your area)

You may also contact the **Development Department** at The Leonardo Building, 2 Rossington Street, Leeds, LS2 8HD, by telephone on 0113 2478000 or send your enquiry by e-mail to planning@leeds.gov.uk