

STATUS OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE ON TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS AND ANTENNAE

Status

This Planning Guidance, which is supplementary to Policy CUS11 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999, has been formally adopted by Woking Borough Council. In this respect the Supplementary Guidance has the status of a material consideration in the determination of planning applications by this Authority and in its defence of its decisions at appeal.

Statement of Public Consultation

In accordance with the advice set out in Annex A (A3) of Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1) on General Policy and Principles, the Supplementary Guidance has been the subject of wide public consultation with a total of 37 consultees, as follows:

i) Telecommunication Code System Operators

Each of the four licensed operators of mobile phone networks comprising:-
Vodafone, B.T. Cellnet, Orange and Mercury 'One to One'.

ii) Local Resident's and Amenity Groups

The Byfleet Parish Council and all the residents and amenity groups within the Borough which are known to the Council, which number 33 in total.

The period of public consultation allowed over 7 weeks for the above organisations to make comments on the Draft Supplementary Guidance. Altogether 5 responses were received. After careful consideration of these representations, the Guidance was amended to address the valid points of concern. These amendments were considered at the Council's Executive Committee on 31 November 2000, when the Guidance was formally adopted. Full details of the representations made to the Council, together with the Council's response can be obtained on request by contacting 01483 743443.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS AND ANTENNAE

(Adopted November 2000)

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 This document sets out Supplementary Planning Guidance on the suitable siting and appearance of telecommunication masts and related equipment.

1.2 This Guidance is supplementary to policy CUS11 of the Woking Borough Local Plan and should be considered by operators before making submissions for the determination of prior approval or formal planning applications for the erection of telecommunication masts, installation of antenna and related control equipment, with the exception of domestic satellite receiver dishes. (The policy is set out in Appendix 2). The main purpose of the guidance is to amplify the criteria set out in policy CUS11 on the suitable siting and appearance of equipment to avoid any adverse visual impact on the environment of the Borough. However, the Council will also use the guidance in helping to determine planning submissions for respective developments. The guidance does not cover health matters which are not a material planning consideration. The National Radiological Board is the public body responsible for the control of emissions from mobile phone equipment.

2.0 GENERAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council recognises that each of the licensed operators which provide a separate network must comply with the terms of the Government licence :

- i) to provide services in an area covering 90% of the population, and;
- ii) to ensure that all reasonable demands on services are capable of being satisfied.

2.2 It is also recognised that there has been enormous growth in the popularity of mobile cellular phones in recent years which has lead to an escalation in demand for each operator to provide additional ground based stations to support these services. Over 50% of the population now own a mobile phone and further growth is likely.

2.3 Recent changes from analogue to digital cellular networks have enabled improvements in the quality and number of mobile transmissions at much reduced power levels. However, the digital system can only operate using shorter transmission distances which requires many more base stations to be provided close to where users make calls. (The Government wishes to see the analogue service wound up by 2005).

2.4 In April 2000 the Government awarded licenses to five operators of Universal Mobile Telecommunication Services (UMTS), known as 3rd Generation. This 'multimedia' service will provide increased business and employment benefits, including greater opportunity for homeworking and generally reducing the need to travel. All operators of this service have a requirement to provide a network covering 80% of the population for this service by 2007.

2.5 As technological improvements continue, equipment is becoming smaller and less obtrusive. The Government has urged operators to utilise equipment with the least visual impact and to expedite the replacement or removal of outdated and redundant equipment in accordance with the Telecommunications Act 1984.

2.6 Following public concern about the possible health effects of mobile phone technology, the independent Stewart Investigation into this matter published its report on 11 May 2000. The report states that the balance of evidence does not suggest that mobile phone technologies are a risk to health. However, it suggests a precautionary approach is taken particularly with regards to children. The report recommends a number of measures, including; the adoption of the International Committee on Non Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure on emission controls, the revocation of permitted development rights for masts, the introduction of a template of planning protocols and the audit and control of base station emissions particularly close to schools and other sensitive sites. The report recommends that these changes are introduced within twelve months which the Government is largely

mindful of adopting after further consultation. However, unless legislation or national planning policy guidance is amended, the Government advises that it should not be necessary for Local Authorities to consider health effects when determining planning applications where proposals meet the ICNIRP guidelines. All equipment used in the UK is designed to operate at frequencies and power levels within these guidelines.

3.0 PLANNING CONTROLS

3.1 Government Guidance underlines the importance of close consultation between operators and local planning authorities prior to making an application. Operators are strongly advised to consult with the Local Planning Authority prior to submitting proposals for the erection of large masts or installation of apparatus in or adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas, such as within Conservation Areas or open areas of the countryside.

3.2 Full planning permission is required for all masts over 15 metres high and for the installation of large masts onto existing buildings and structures not falling within the scope of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 as set out in appendix 1.

3.3 Telecommunication Code System Operators are allowed to carry out development permitted by Part 24 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (GPDO)(as amended). This allows an operator to carry out certain developments (as set out in appendix 1) subject to the operator making a prior approval application to the Local Authority, but excludes developments within Sites of Special Scientific Interest and article 1(5) land, which in Woking comprises all Conservation Areas. Operators proposing to carry out development permitted under the above legislation as set out in appendix 1, must submit details to the Local Authority to determine within the specified period (either 42 or 28 days) if “**Prior Approval**” is required for the **siting** or **appearance** of the proposal.

Prior Approval - Ground Based Masts up to 15 m.

3.4 The prior approval procedure allows Local Planning Authorities to control the siting and appearance of a proposed ground based mast up to 15 m. high for which the Local Authority is allowed 42 days to notify the applicant of its decision. It is a particular requirement of submissions made under the 42 day procedure for applicants to provide:

- i) A copy of the site notice and plan showing where it is displayed. (The applicant must display the notice on site for 21 days inviting the public to make representations about the siting and appearance of the proposed development. Where appropriate the Council may undertake wider public consultation with local residents and amenity groups and consider any views made).
- ii) Evidence that the possible use of an existing mast , building or other structure has been fully considered before making the submission.

Prior Approval - Other Permitted Development

3.5 The prior approval procedure also allows Local Planning Authorities to control the siting and appearance of most other telecommunication development permitted under Part 24 of Schedule 2 (but excluding antennae). Under these regulations the Local Authority is allowed 28 days to notify the applicant of its decision. Submissions made under the 28 day procedure differ from those made under the 42 day procedure in that there is no requirement to provide a site notice or any evidence that siting equipment on an existing mast or other structure has been considered. Where the Council considers that the proposal will affect the setting of a Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument, or site on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, it will also consult English Heritage and the Garden History Society for its views as appropriate.

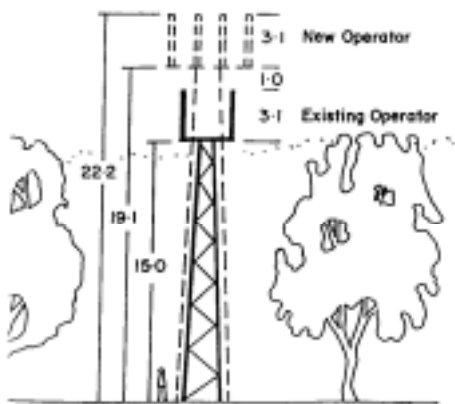
4.0 SITING OF MASTS

4.1 To avoid further visual impact, it will often be preferable to site a new antenna onto an existing mast, building or other structure, subject to the technical and operational

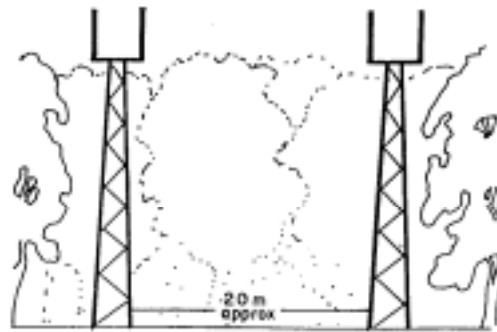
requirements of the operator, before considering a new mast site. Applicants are expected to show evidence that they have explored all reasonable possibilities and must submit this in evidence when submitting an application for planning permission or notification for prior approval for the erection of a new ground based mast, in accordance with criteria (iv) and (v) of policy CUS 11.

Use of Existing Mast Sites

- 4.2 The Council holds a register of existing masts on which it should be possible to site additional antenna, including sites in neighbouring Districts. Unless an Operator can provide evidence to the contrary the Council will refuse applications for new masts where an existing mast (or site) could be used satisfactorily.
- 4.3 As operators require a minimum one metre vertical separation between the antenna of different networks, the attachment of further antenna onto an existing mast will normally result in placing apparatus at a much higher level where it may be more conspicuous. In certain locations where the height of additional apparatus might be a particular concern, it may be preferable to provide a further mast on the site, rather than share a mast.



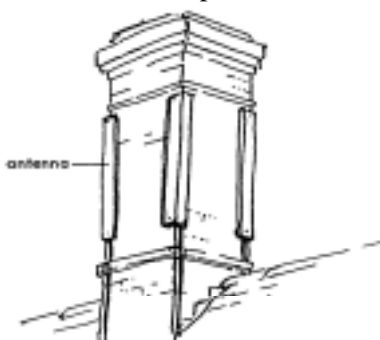
Second antenna requires additional height



Two masts may have less visual impact

Placing Masts or Apparatus on an Existing Building or Structure

- 4.4 Although there may be many man made structures which might provide a satisfactory location to site apparatus, this will largely depend on the design and character of the building or structure. Existing open structures such as electricity pylons may particularly lend themselves to such a use. However, buildings of distinct architectural quality may be adversely affected by the attachment of incongruous elements.
- 4.5 Extensive apparatus such as a mast or array of antenna can be highly visible when placed on top of the roof of a building and may not be acceptable if it is one which has a particularly prominent or distinctive roofline such as a tower or church spire which forms a local landmark that is visually important to the character of an area. The build up of equipment on a roof is also discouraged where this will have an adverse impact.



- 4.6 Antenna placed below the roofline or directly attached to existing vertical surfaces in the

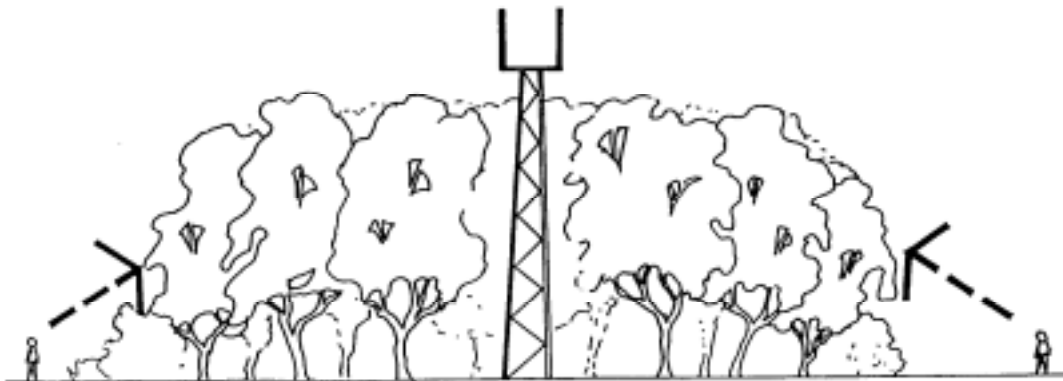
form of panels, such as on a chimney stack, can often provide a less obtrusive solution, particularly when coloured to blend in with the building fabric.

Antenna placed directly onto the existing building

- 4.7 Fixing apparatus onto an historic building or structure can detract from its appearance and may cause damage to its historic fabric. Separate consent will normally be required for placing apparatus on Statutory Listed Buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas or within the curtilage of such buildings, which is unlikely to be acceptable if it adversely affects their character, appearance or setting.
- 4.8 In exceptional circumstances where apparatus is permitted on a Listed Building or within its grounds or within a Conservation Area, the benefits of funding restoration or other environmental improvements may help to mitigate the visual intrusion caused by the installation.

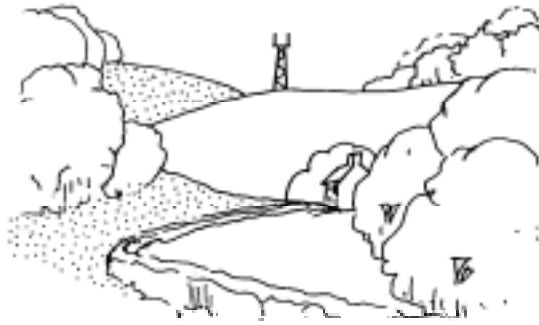
5.0 New Mast Sites

- 5.1 Where it is not possible to utilise an existing mast site or structure, the principal aim for any new installation is to minimise its visual impact on the environmental quality of the Borough, in accordance with criteria (vi) of policy CUS 11. There are a number of ways this can be achieved as shown below:
- 5.2 Sites within, or close to, existing mature woodland are preferred as they will have significantly reduced visual impact, even though the equipment used will usually be higher than the existing tree line.

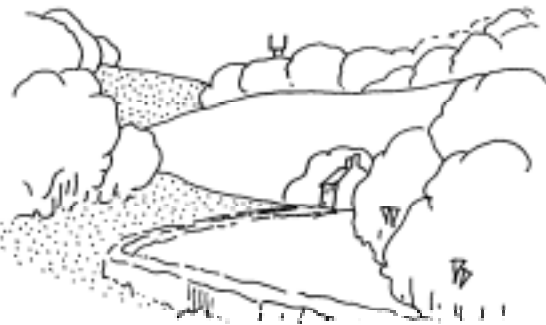


Views of mast largely obscured by existing trees

- 5.3 Within the more built up areas of towns and villages, enclosed sites within commercial areas are preferred such as within industrial estates, business estates or operational land such as that associated with the railway where masts will be less conspicuous against a background of other buildings and structures.
- 5.4 Mast sites within close proximity of existing residential areas may not be permitted where their siting and appearance would be detrimental to the character or amenity of residential properties, particularly where the height of equipment is incongruous in relation to the scale of domestic properties.
- 5.5 Where possible large masts should not be sited in open areas of the countryside, particularly on open raised ground which will accentuate any visual intrusion caused by the installation and in particular should avoid elevated sites where their profile will have a significant impact on the skyline such as on a ridgeline or escarpment.



Masts should not be sited in open areas of countryside



Suitable tree planting can reduce impact

- 5.6 Where it is not possible to avoid an open or conspicuous location applicants must include sufficient land within the site to achieve a satisfactory level of tree planting or other method of screening the apparatus. Although individual circumstances will vary, the depth of tree screening and the mature height of selected species will need to be in scale with the height of the mast.
- 5.7 Where a new mast or site is being granted permission the Council may require the operator to enter a legal agreement (Section 106) to ensure that another operator can site further antenna (or where appropriate to erect a further mast) on the same site, which they are obliged to do under the terms of their operators licence.

Environmentally sensitive sites

- 5.8 Proposals for new masts in the vicinity of the following environmentally sensitive locations will require approval of siting and appearance and are unlikely to be acceptable if they result in any adverse impact in accordance with criteria (ii) of policy CUS 11:
- 5.9 **Open areas of the Green Belt;**
 given the extent of the Green Belt, operators may find it unavoidable to locate masts in these areas to provide a suitable network.
Mast installations will not be permitted if they will have an adverse visual impact on the open character of the Green Belt. The general guidance above concerning new mast sites suggests the type of location, such as within well treed areas, where it should be possible to site equipment without affecting the open character of an area.
- 5.10 **Areas of landscape significance including;**
 the escarpments and rising ground of Hook Heath, Inkerman and Pyrford,
 the river corridors of the Wey, Hoe Stream, and Bourne Stream,
 the canal corridors of the Wey Navigation and Basingstoke Canal,
 areas of Urban Open Space.
Mast installations will not be permitted where they would be visually incongruous from publicly accessible areas or detract from the landscape character of the area. The general guidance above concerning new mast sites sets out how to deal with these issues.
- 5.11 **The setting of buildings and areas of architectural or historic significance including;**
 designated Conservation Areas,
 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Statutory Listed Buildings,
 Sites on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens,
 locally Listed buildings,
Mast installations will not be permitted where their proximity and incongruous appearance would impinge on the character, appearance or setting of historic buildings, conservation areas, or sites on the register of historic parks and gardens. These are mostly small areas of the Borough where it should be possible to avoid locating installations and still provide a good telecommunication network. However, where the installation of masts or antenna are unavoidable in these areas, particular

care will be required on the detailed siting and design of installations to provide a sensitive solution which may require non standard equipment.

5.12 **Areas of nature conservation Importance including;**

Sites of Special scientific interest,

Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.

Mast installations will not be permitted where they would result in a loss or disturbance of habitat or that of the associated flora and fauna. These are very discreet areas of the Borough where it should be possible to avoid locating equipment.

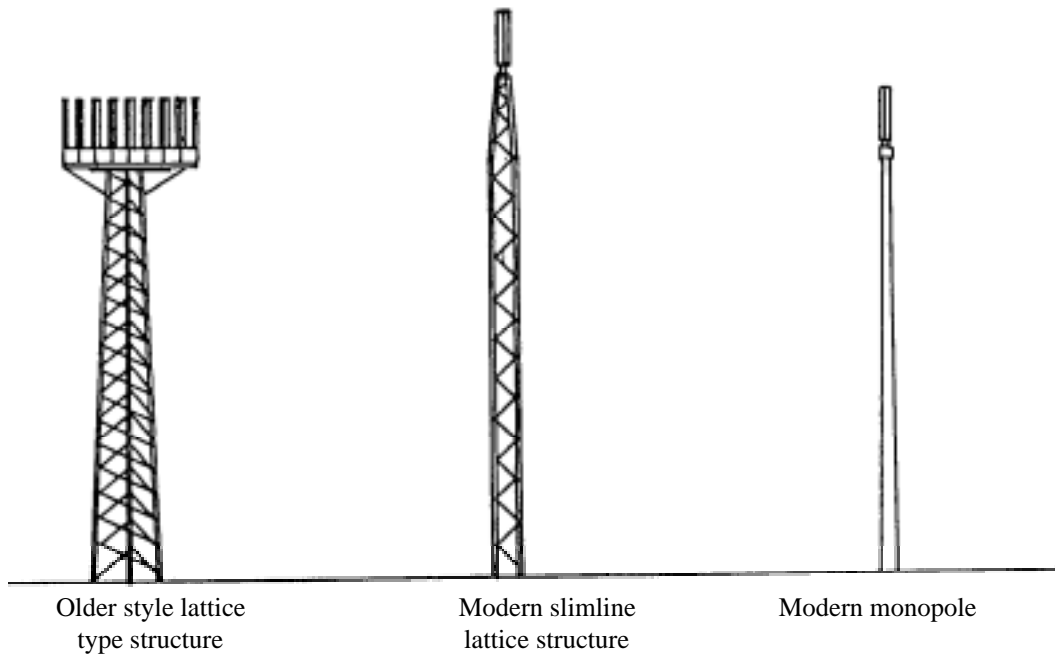
6.0 **Mast Design**

6.1 In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance PPG8 on Telecommunications and Circular 04/99, operators and manufacturers should constantly bear in mind the environmental implications of telecommunications technology and consider the use of materials, colours and design which would minimise obtrusiveness.

6.2 The basic types of mast design are set out below. However, it is also possible to place antenna directly onto the vertical face of an existing building or structure.

6.3 Open latticework structures are normally used for large masts as they have strength and rigidity with limited wind resistance. However, older style triangular framed masts, particularly those associated with analogue systems, have an industrial appearance which can look incongruous in open countryside and many urban areas.

6.4 Wherever possible modern slimline lattice towers should be used in circumstances where a high mast is required (normally up to 30 metres) unless there are overriding technical reasons for not doing so. Operators are also encouraged to use this type of equipment to replace older style masts.



- 6.4 Modern monopole designs which have a slender profile are also encouraged as they are less likely to be obtrusive in most locations and lend themselves to disguise as other features, such as street lights or even lightning conductors on church spires. Although operators are encouraged to use or adapt this form of design it is recognised that there may be technical limitations which restrict their use as high masts.

7.0 Colour and Finish of Equipment

- 7.1 Apparatus should have a matt (non reflective) finish. In sensitive locations natural, bare metal finishes will not be acceptable and the use of permanent coloured coatings such as by anodising or polyester powder coating are suggested.
- 7.2 Colour finishes should be suitable for the individual location and should be used to help camouflage the presence of the apparatus.
- i) Pale colours such as light grey are best used for equipment which is normally viewed against the open sky.
 - ii) Darker hues of grey or brown will suit most other urban locations, or where appropriate a colour should be chosen which is similar to the fabric of the building on which it is located.
 - iii) Mid brown or drab olive will suit most rural locations, but brighter greens should be avoided.

Appendix 1
Main Development Permitted under Schedule 2 of Part 24.
(excludes development on article 1(5) land and SSSI's)

- a) Ground based apparatus such as a mast up to 15 m. in height above ground level.
- b) Apparatus sited on a building or structure, other than an antenna, where :
 - i) the apparatus itself does not exceed 15 m. height, if the building or structure is over 30m. in height, or exceeds 10m. height , if the building or structure is less than 30m. in height, providing that ;
 - ii) it does not add to the total overall height of the building or structure by more than;
 - * 10m. for buildings or structures of 30 m. or more
 - * 8m. for buildings or structures between 15m. and 30m.
 - * 6m. For buildings or structures of 15m. or less.
- c) Up to 2 antenna systems may be installed on a non residential building or other structure which is below 15m. in height (except Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments) providing they are not installed on walls or roofslopes facing a highway within 20m. of the building, and;
 - up to 3 antenna systems may be installed on a non residential building or structure which is above 15m. in height (except Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments) provided : no individual dish antenna exceeds 1.3m. and the aggregate size of all the dishes does not exceed 3.5m.
- d) There are no planning limits on the number of antennas that can be installed on a ground based radio mast.
- e) Radio equipment housing and ancillary works may be installed provided that ;
 - i) it is ancillary to the telecommunication installation, and;
 - ii) the volume of the housing does not exceed 90 cubic metres, or where installed on the roof of a building does not exceed 30 cubic metres.
- f) Where any development is carried out by an operator in an emergency, such as for health and safety reasons, the operator must notify the Local Planning Authority as soon as possible after the emergency begins.
- g) Redundant apparatus should be removed as soon as practically possible and the land restored to it's condition prior to the development.

Appendix 2
Woking Borough Local Plan 1999 – Policy CUS11

CUS11 ü TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- (i) A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR NEW NETWORKS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED WITH THE LOCATION AND TYPE OF FACILITIES DETERMINED HAVING REGARD TO THE NEED TO MINIMISE ANY ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND
- (ii) THERE WOULD BE NO ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE ESCARPMENTS AND RISING GROUND OF LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE, CONSERVATION AREAS, CANAL AND RIVER CORRIDORS, AREAS OF URBAN OPEN SPACE DESIGNATED IN THE LOCAL PLAN, OR ON THE OPEN CHARACTER OF THE GREEN BELT, AND
- (iii) THERE ARE NO SATISFACTORY ALTERNATIVE SITES FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WHICH ARE LESS ENVIRONMENTALLY HARMFUL; AND
- (iv) THERE IS NO REASONABLE POSSIBILITY OF SHARING EXISTING FACILITIES; AND
- (v) IN THE CASE OF RADIO MASTS, THERE IS NO REASONABLE POSSIBILITY OF ERECTING ANTENNAE ON AN EXISTING BUILDING OR OTHER STRUCTURE.
- (vi) THE DEVELOPMENT IS SITED AND DESIGNED SO AS TO MINIMISE ITS VISUAL IMPACT, SUBJECT TO TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS.

JUSTIFICATION

- 10.51 The Council recognises that telecommunications and improvements in the network are of benefit to the local and national economy. This policy gives a positive response to new telecommunications development but acknowledges that environmental concerns of visual impact will also weigh in the Council's decision making process. Where an application for a new mast is proposed the Council will expect the applicant to submit a detailed plan of the existing and proposed network in the locality and to demonstrate that criteria (iii) to (vi) of the policy have been complied with.
- 10.52 All new masts permitted under this policy should be of a design, specification and, where possible, location to maximise opportunities for easy mast sharing. Where a new facility is required because an operator considers that sharing would be unreasonable it is for the operator to demonstrate to the Council in what respect sharing of facilities would be unreasonable
- 10.53 Special attention to detail and siting will be needed in particularly sensitive locations. These include Conservation Areas, Escarpments and Rising Ground of Landscape Importance, Canals and River Corridors, Urban Open Space and the Green Belt generally. In some cases the Council may refuse planning permission because of siting or appearance considerations.
- 10.54 Policy CUS11 will be applied where planning permission is required for the installation of telecommunications infrastructure. However, under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (G.D.O.), operators enjoy a number of Permitted Development Rights. In particular, permission is frequently not required for installation of telecom equipment on a building or structure less than 15 metres in height.