CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

TELECOMS DEVELOPMENT

DESIGN GUIDE

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared to assist mobile phone operators and their advisers in preparing suitable designs for telecoms development in Cambridge City. It is non-statutory and is meant to complement Government guidance as contained in PPG8 and the 'Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development'. Operators are also required to consult the Cambridgeshire County Structure Plan and the Cambridge Local Plan for planning policy guidance.

The document is intended as a general guide only and each proposal will need to be considered on its merits. Nothing in this document will bind the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in its consideration of an application. It will be sent to all operators and made available via a link from the telecoms pages on the Council's website.

2. Ground-based Masts

New masts in the City will generally be discouraged as they are not usually an appropriate form of development in the urban landscape. Masts will need to be carefully located to minimise visual impact. In particular, in Conservation Areas, LPA policy is to reduce street clutter and prominent structures, and masts will not normally be permitted. Similarly, a special case would need to be made for a mast to be erected in the Green Belt, on Listed Buildings or near protected trees.

Installations on buildings or existing masts will, in most cases, be the preferred options.

In cases where there are no other suitable alternatives, new masts will need to be of a scale and design appropriate to the surroundings. Masts should be as short as technically possible to reduce visual impact and slimline poles will generally be preferred to lattice structures. They should be located in order to make use of existing screening, both at low and high levels. Cabinets should be grouped together and close to the base of the mast. Cabinets and masts should be painted in a suitable colour, to be agreed with the LPA. Specialist advice may need to be taken if a mast is proposed close to trees, especially if the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Streetworks solutions will be considered on their merits but an over-proliferation of such masts in close vicinity will be discouraged. Operators should consider options such as streetlamp swap-outs, replica telegraph poles (although not in Conservation Areas) and antennas on existing CCTV poles, as these might be more appropriate in certain situations.

3. Antennae on Existing Buildings

Antennae should be placed on the building to create the least visual impact and to have minimal impact above the roofline. Usually this will mean fixing below parapet height. Antennae should be painted to match the background. Cabinets should where possible be located at ground level or within the building. Otherwise, they should be placed on the roof in a position where they will be least visible.

Efforts should be made to camouflage the equipment. In some cases, a shroud to conceal the antennae and/or the cabinets may be suitable. Antennae can be hidden in flagpoles to help reduce the visual impact.

4. Installations in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings

Particular attention must be paid to the design and siting of installations in Conservation Areas, which cover much of central Cambridge. Council policy is to reduce street clutter and prominent structures, and masts will not normally be permitted. Masts must not be detrimental to the views of important buildings or open spaces.

For proposals on buildings or other structures, operators will be expected to produce designs that respect the architectural style and are in proportion with the building. All opportunities to camouflage the equipment must be considered. A site meeting should be held at an early stage in the design process with a Planning Officer and Conservation Officer from the LPA.

5. Other Issues

This Guide mainly addresses visual matters, but other amenity issues such as noise must also be considered. Aerial installations on inhabited buildings, in particular tall blocks of flats, can create a noise nuisance and cause low frequency vibrations. Operators will be expected to consider possible noise issues during the design phase. If problems develop post-construction, due to the installation, the operator will be required to eradicate the problem as quickly as possible – if necessary, by employing a specialist noise consultant.

Noise must be kept to a minimum during the construction phase, in particular if the site is in a residential area. Consideration must also be given to possible noise nuisance from air conditioning or heating equipment in equipment cabins.

Installations on buildings should be designed to enable easy access to the equipment, which will cause the least disturbance to occupiers.

6. Summary

Bearing in mind the importance and architectural quality of many of the buildings in Cambridge and the fact that much of the City is densely populated, the siting and design of telecoms installations is crucially important. Discussions with the Planning Officer at an early stage should help to ensure an appropriate form of development. This should apply for all types of developments, even licence notifications.

This document should act as a general guide for operators. It cannot cover all situations but is intended as a first step in preventing unsuitable designs and reducing delay.

For further information or a discussion on individual sites, please contact Tim Long, Telecoms Liaison Officer, on 01223 457156 or email tim.long@cambridge.gov.uk

7. Appendix

www.cambridge.gov.uk - City Council website, with a section on Telecoms in the Planning Pages and links to the Local Plan.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk - County Council website, with links to the Structure Plan.