

# **Thurnham Parish Council**

## **Telecom Mast Policy.**

### **Introduction.**

Members have commented on the increasing numbers of planning applications for new masts and for additions/alterations to existing masts. It is believed that most Council members and most members of the public are concerned about both aesthetic and health issues connected with the masts. Thurnham therefore wish to form a policy that can be used when commenting on planning applications related to masts.

### **Design and location issues**

The design of masts is one of function rather than appearance. Operators naturally wish their masts to operate to a high technical standard at the most economical cost. This results in tall utilitarian structures that we see on prominent points in the landscape.

### **Health issues**

The effects on health due to the transmitters are unproven. It should be noted that all transmitters radiate outwards and the area of least risk is below. Therefore this factor needs to be considered in choosing a site. The health risk from the use of handsets is more generally accepted. The trend to lower power handsets and masts (see below) is therefore progress in the right direction.

### **Mast Proliferation.**

The reasons for so many planning applications are believed to be due to the following factors:

1. Each generation of mobile telephones is lower in power than the previous version with the consequent loss of transmission range.
2. The lower power of the handsets results in the need for greater numbers of masts. (To increase power at existing masts would not help the situation.
3. There is an unwillingness of operators to share masts.
4. If masts are shared then they need to be of greater height.
5. The G3 system is being prepared for operation.
6. Highway authorities are unwilling to allow street and road lighting posts for mast use.
7. Improving technology.
8. A reluctance of the Rail Link Companies to accept masts within the security corridor.

The number of applications is therefore unlikely to decrease and our objective should be to minimise the impact of the masts in the landscape.

## **Thurnham Parish Council** **Adopted Telecom Mast Policy.**

It is recognised that Maidstone Borough Council is the planning authority but Thurnham should ask MBC to publicly and transparently demonstrate:

1. That in respect to Thurnham, masts should be located where practical along the rail link corridor.
2. There is independent technical evidence to support the immediate need for the mast and to justify the target audience. All applications should demonstrate need from practical tests to determine height and power output needed. (Computer predictions should not be accepted)
3. Mast sharing applications should not be normally be acceptable if this results in an increase in height.
4. That alternative and sympathetic structures have been considered for both new masts and where substantial additions to existing masts are proposed. e in All applications should demonstrate need from practical tests to determine height and power output needed. (Computer predictions will not be accepted e.g. standing tree design or similar.
5. That applications for new masts be sensitively sited and designs other than utilitarian lattice towers should be used.
6. Lighting authorities should be encouraged to change their policy of not using lamp standards for sighting low power masts.
7. That a website register be maintained to show all past planning applications whether successful or not. This should show all masts currently in place.

In addition Thurnham believes that MBC should make a quinquennial review to audit the use of existing masts and enforce removal of redundant structures and equipment. This review should indicate how the site is being maintained in accordance with the original planning permission.

This review should be publicly notified and comments invited from interested parties.

*Agreed and Adopted by Thurnham Parish Council at its meeting on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2003.*