

Strategy to fight planning Applications for 5G Masts (v2)

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Planning with the Team / Group

I present a simple case here there are complications in planning which varies with mast height and the type of land. I recommend that at least one member of your team reads about it and learns.

Build the Team

You will collect people from three main sources:

1. People you know already
2. People who may be active in something else (eg SitP, Residents' Association NRA, Cassie Longford)
3. People who have a mast application nearby. These tend to be less reliable and many will not continue for others once theirs has been refused.

Some people will be happy to send in an objection if you give them a link but don't want to be active. They are also valuable.

When you get your team together you may find there are several outstanding applications. You need to process these as quickly as possible as it will give the Council Planning Officers something to think about. If there is insufficient time to get in any objections you may have to let some go and make a token objection to others.

For each Application there are several actions:

1. Scan through the application and visit the site to take photographs or video.
2. Study the application and documents.
3. Study coverage maps (optional)
4. Write and distribute letters to all houses within at least 200 metres and preferably 500.
 1. Prepare the supplied template (add the application reference and Council name then print as many copies as you want to collect objections. (at least 100)
5. Write to any 'sensitive receptor' sites; schools, hospitals, care homes, nursing homes, 'over 60s' flats; religious and other meeting places etc
6. Write a letter for the Ward Councillors - it could be almost the same.
7. If you cannot do 4.1, write a petition and collect signatures from said residents, note though, that **a petition without the objections is unlikely to have an effect**, and, generally will count as a single objection. Send it to the head of planning, chair of the Planning Committee, the Ward Councillors and the Council Leader plus the Mayor if you have one.
8. Make objections on the website, via email or letter.

Numbers count here and, as they are individual, everyone at an address can submit their own - even children, with the help of parents.

Copy your objection to the Ward Councillors, they should be listening to their constituents. You can even say you won't vote for them ever again.

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9. Request to speak at the planning committee meeting.

Note: I'm becoming increasingly aware of the importance of this having watched one on-line and seen the total incompetence, lack of knowledge and relaxed attitude of committee members. Also the lack of knowledge from the planning officer.

Some applications are decided by delegated decision, ie by the planning officer(s).

Visiting the Site of the proposed Mast

You may want to skip this especially in the winter; **don't**. You can learn so much about it that you don't know, even better, you may meet some people who live there. Ask them if they know about the application and you will quickly learn of their opinion. You will already have looked for a notice on a street-light pole or a bus-stop for example.

You will see the 'lay of the land' - will the antennas be near someone's windows for example? Also schools, hospitals, libraries, indeed anywhere with high footfall or that involves vulnerable people (sensitive receptors). Are there other masts anywhere near? If so measure the radiation while you are there and take a picture of the meter reading to send in with your objection.

Take pictures or video to show (eg) how close homes etc are to the location. You can be sure that the applicant will have taken them to show there are none anywhere near. You can send them to the Council separately by email (but note it in your on-line objection). Note traffic views from all directions - car eye-lines are lower than pedestrian standing ones so a picture taken from a low angle may give a better impression. Often I will stand in the spot where the pole will be and take a video all around, just turning on the spot.

Have an imaginative mind when you go; it is an exploration. I will not have covered all the possibilities. You must also be prepared to answer questions from people. Most will be supportive, from my experience. Don't get into arguments, agree to disagree and walk on.

Inspecting the Application and Downloading

This is the most intensive part and requires the most time-consuming work

Access your local Council website and please note they are all very different so I cannot give precise instructions from here on.

Find the Planning page via a search on the site or menu options.

Find the 'search for an application' function (or equivalent).

Many look similar to this:

Planning – Simple Search

Search for Planning Applications, Appeals and Enforcements by keyword, application reference, postcode or by a single line of an address.

Simple Advanced Weekly/Monthly Lists Property Map

Applications Appeals Enforcements

Status:

Enter a **keyword**, **reference number**, **postcode** or **single line of an address**.

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Diagram 1

Most Councils have a Weekly or Monthly list; both a simple search and advanced search where you can (for example) use a date range.

Finding the correct search term for your Council can be a tricky exercise but is important since using the wrong one will mean that you miss them all. It's changing all the time and in each Council. You will use this only the first time "**cabinets**" is currently the most successful term since all those intended for 5G antennas mention them. Other terms to try are "phase", "pole" "antenna", "telecoms".

If none of your guesses work do a date range search of about 60 days – decisions must be made within 56 days. If you know the application reference or street name use that.

Look through the list to find the one(s) in which you are interested.

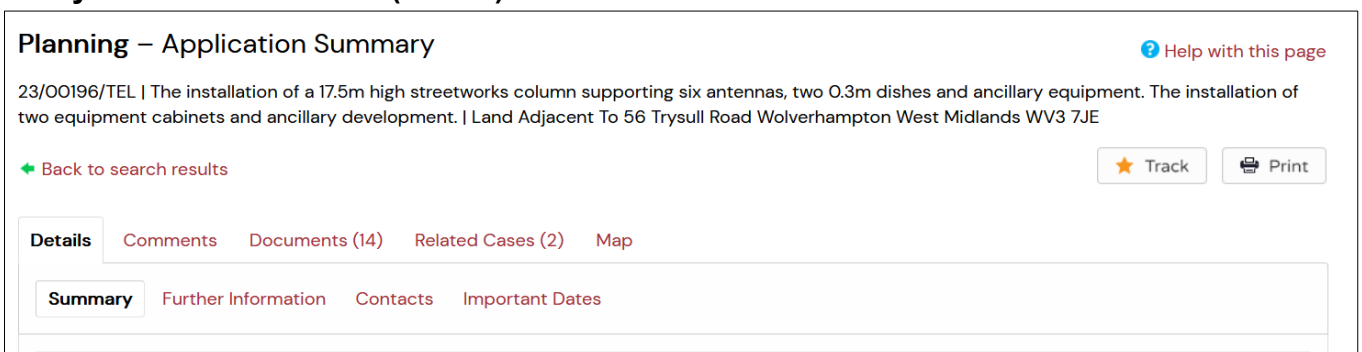
this is where the advanced search can be useful to limit the number of results.

Click on the link to open the page for that particular application.

It should open on a '**summary**' or '**details** page' with a few details and lots of tabs to other pages. The first time you look at the site spend some time looking at each tab to familiarise yourself with the layout and general content.

Once you have done that first search, for future ones I strongly advise to check EVERY WEEK using the weekly list of new applications. We have also found that you must check the previous **TWO** weeks, to ensure that you catch ones that were received in one week but put on the website the next week.

Many look similar to this (not all):



The screenshot shows a web page titled "Planning – Application Summary". The main content area contains the text: "23/00196/TEL | The installation of a 17.5m high streetworks column supporting six antennas, two 0.3m dishes and ancillary equipment. The installation of two equipment cabinets and ancillary development. | Land Adjacent To 56 Trysull Road Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 7JE". Below this text are two buttons: "Back to search results" and "Track" (with a star icon) and "Print" (with a printer icon). At the bottom, there are several tabs: "Details", "Comments", "Documents (14)", "Related Cases (2)", and "Map". The "Summary" tab is currently selected.

Diagram 2

Notes: I like to download as much as I can since it means I can place highlights or even notes on the documents which is not possible on the website. I also copy the address (URL) and paste it into the downloaded document as I will use it in my letters to residents.

I also set up a **new folder** for each application and name it something obvious like the street name.

Those things might mean you learning how to do it if you are not too familiar with using computers and the internet. I'm sure someone in the group or team will be able to help and show people how to do it.

OK - now back to the steps.

Open a new document, copy the text from the details page and paste it into the new document. Save the document to the folder.

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Under '**Details**' there are other tabs such as 'Information', 'Contacts' and 'Dates'; where they exist I copy their content and paste it into the same document. eg



Diagram 3

Check the dates carefully (highlight them) as it will give you the closing date for comments/objections and the date for the decision or meeting. There should be 56 days from the application to the decision. Some cases may be decided by the Case Officer (as a "delegated decision") and not go to the committee.



Diagram 4

The next most important tab is the one usually labelled "**Documents**"; this will contain the Application itself and Supplementary Information, location and site Plans an ICNIRP self-certificate plus an odd assortment of others. In this case (*Diagram 4*) you can see there are 14 in total. What you will have for any application is likely to vary considerably.

The best and most useful document to us for making objections is the **Supplementary Information** (Sometimes called the 'Site Specific Supplementary Information' or the 'SSSI') and, confusingly, sometimes something entirely different! If it isn't there, ask the Council planning Case Officer why not. It's the document that contains all the important details of the application and the one on which you can hang many objections.

The **Plan** should give you a map and a photograph which will be taken to give the best impression for the applicant. You need to take photographs to support your objection, eg showing the closeness of homes.

If any of those four, Application, ICNIRP, SSSI or plan is missing put in an early objection and complain about it or send an email to the case officer or head of planning. The Council should be transparent and work to time. You need to have enough information to make any intelligent comments in sufficient time.

Note: It is the Council's duty to be open and transparent and to follow due process at all times. You can remind them of that by (politely) reminding them of the Nolan Principles.

(<https://tinyurl.com/4c5ssfdk>)

Another Note: *I have yet to see an application that mentions anything specific about the cabinets other than the number of them and sometimes the dimensions. Even when a mast is superimposed on the picture (usually as an arrow) the cabinets are never shown. I think this is because they will be the most obvious things after it is installed and they want you to forget about them and they have "**permitted development**" rights on the cabinets but not the mast.*

Many of the other documents are simply PR. Note that *Mobile UK* is the association for the telecom companies.

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Click on the '**Documents**' tab and it should open on a new page with a list of mostly pdf files with some Word and JPEG files. There is sometimes a facility to download all the documents at once and they will come to the common downloads folder as a zip-file. Move or copy the documents to your folder. Notice when you download them they will appear on your computer in alphanumeric order which is likely to be different to that on the website. You can then remove the zip folder to keep your downloads clean.

If there is not a "download all" option you will have to download each document individually.

Now you have everything on your computer and can ignore the website for a while.

Create a new document for making your own notes and save it to the folder.

Study all the documents in order. My way is, in order;

1. the Application
2. self-certificate for ICNIRP compliance
3. the Plans and Location documents (including picture)
4. the Supplementary Information

1 will give the basics and should indicate consultations to neighbours and schools.

2 ICNIRP does NOT issue certificates. It is a "SELF" issued certificate. There is of course a clear conflict of interest here.

3 will give you a feel for the site - still visit it as it gives you a chance to wander around and, if you're lucky, to speak with some residents. You may also spot other poles.

4 will give the detail, including claimed reasons for the 'acute need'!

Writing a Residents' Letter

Even if you use the template process it can be useful to leave a leaflet of some kind with each home.

You can draw up a template for about 50% and add the remainder from a study of the documents. I will give you an example to start you off but quickly develop your own template. I'm sure you will want to.

The headline about loss of house value may seem trivial, and is irrelevant in a Council Estate, but it can galvanise people into doing something and at least it attracts their eyes, unfortunately the planners will ignore it. If you make it easy for people to send an objection they might just do it. You have to overcome much inertia but you might also collect another volunteer for the group.

I make sure to include our contact details and the url of the Council site AND to the application. That is usually long, so I use <https://tinyurl.com> to make it short and manageable. No-one is going to copy 30 characters of a link from a piece of paper; in an email it matters not, on paper it does.

Then I add a photograph of a local installation as that is more real than a diagram from the plan or a general image; and I give the name of the street. Make a composite of the actual, site if you have that skill. (I don't)

Then contact details and a note that there are suggestions overleaf for assisting them with writing an objection. That's important as most people will not be used to objecting to something their Council is doing.

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On one A4 side only it will not be a comprehensive list so stick with things that apply to most sites and specifics to the site itself. You will have got that from a study of the SSSI, a visit to the site and any chats you have had with nearby residents. At this stage don't confuse - remember your **only** objective is to get the application refused.

Using the Template

Complete the Application reference and the Council name and THEN print at least 100 templates. Print it as a two-side documents (ie double side printing. Most printers will be faster if you print 100 on one side and then turn the paper and print the other side.)

Take a number of templates and either stand in a busy street or knock door-to-door. Tell people about the proposal and ask if they want it; if they say "yes" walk on; if they say "no" ask if they would like to submit an objection. Give them the template to write the details on the form, check chosen boxes, sign at the foot and return it to you as you wait. Don't let them take away the form; collect it on the spot. Note that if two people are together, each one can submit an objection.

Then in a subsequent day you deliver a batch of completed forms to the Council. Make sure that you get a signed receipt stating the number of forms delivered. You can put them in an envelope addressed to the case officer, not sealed until you get a receipt.

This has proven a successful means of gathering a large number of objections in a relatively short time. You can ask them if it is OK to contact them again for other masts.

Have an A5 flyer that you can leave with anyone who completes the template and ensure it has your group contact details.

Writing Objections

*Note: When an application is refused, the applicant has the right to appeal to the secretary of state, ie the Planning Inspectorate. The Council does not have to inform anyone in the public **other than anyone who has objected**. So if no-one objected to the original application, no-one would know. **THAT** is (one reason) why objections are so important.*

The easiest and quickest way for most people to make a planning objection (other than with the template) is via the Council website. One of the other tabs is usually labelled "**Comments**". This is where people can file supporting comments and objections. On some sites you must check a box or button to say which it is, on others you have to register, you will always have to give name and address.

You have put the link on your letter so they just have to select the Comments tab and the first few fields will be for personal information. Then there is usually a large field for your objections. I say 'large' as I have pasted about 2,000 characters (a couple of A4 pages equivalent) but there is a limit.

If you wrote your letter well anyone will be able to copy your text and they will quickly enter several objections.

That can be 'job done' for them. Other people will want to do more. Get every member of your team/group and their families to make an objection and in that way you will rapidly get numbers, which is important. I noted earlier that each comment is an individual one so everyone has a comment. There is no age limit I know of and as children will be affected for longer than us, they should have the opportunity. (Maybe they will get their school friends or the whole class or even school to do it.) If you have family members or friends who are not tech savvy, ask them for permission and do it for them or they can hand-write a letter.

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Speaking at a Planning Committee

If you can attend or view a committee meeting where a mast is considered, before you have got rolling then you can record it and judge the competence of the people. There may be past ones on video if the Council has been streaming their meetings.

You will be given 3 or 4 minutes, often expressed as "can be read in 3 minutes" or similar. This is insufficient time to cover many points so focus on the important ones and those over which you are most confident which will probably be the site specific (visibility and location and why it is incompatible), technical or legal (eg liability, insurance)

We notice there is a lack of competence in all the ones we have been able to attend or watch so afterwards you can contact the head of Planning.