

MAST PLANNING PERMISSION

Mast Planning Application FAQs

Below are answers to frequently asked questions in relation to planning and proposed mast locations. Please note, planning procedures and policies vary across regions. Views or questions about planning applications for any specific site should be addressed to the relevant local planning authority (LPA).



Q Are you building a new mast or upgrading an existing mast?

A Both. The Shared Rural Network is being delivered in two parts: the industry funded element will support improvements in partial not spot areas, areas where there is coverage from at least one but not all operators; these improvements will be delivered through a mix of upgrading existing masts and building brand new masts.

The publicly funded element of the programme will deliver entirely brand new masts in total not spots, the areas with no coverage from any operator. As part of the publicly funded element, some existing government infrastructure is also being made available for commercial use.

Q Does a mast need planning permission?

A Not all telecoms development requires full planning permission. However, it is anticipated that many SRN masts will require full planning permission given the rural nature of the proposed site locations.

In some cases, operators can use Permitted Development Rights to carry out certain types of telecoms development, the use of Prior Notification Applications for these types of development can be used by the operators and their suppliers. These applications are processed under normal planning procedures and will be assessed against a range of planning criteria and policies.

Q What will the masts look like? (size, height, colour, etc.)

A Each mast is different and as such we can not comment on individual cases. The operators and their suppliers will plan the mast size and appearance based on a number of factors. It may be that the geography requires a taller mast from a technical perspective, or it may be that as part of the planning process a specific paint colour is requested. The details of what a specific mast will look like will be included in the planning application. You can read our factsheet on what the different parts of the mast look like.

Q Why have you applied for permission in this location?

A Each mast location has been chosen following extensive research. A particular mast will have its own individual reasons for being sited where it has, however, in general a mast location has been chosen to maximise coverage delivery for the area, taking into account a range of factors including, access, power and buildability. You can read our factsheet on location selection to understand what factors are taken into consideration

Q Do you have the landowner's permission to build the mast?

A In the majority of cases, operators and their suppliers have obtained permission from the landowner to access this site and build on it. This may include gaining permission from neighbouring landowners who own land which needs to be crossed to reach the site. The desire is to achieve entirely consensual agreement to access sites for the SRN, however, in a small number of cases where it has not been possible to obtain permission, operators are able to still access the site using certain legal powers.

Q How can I show my support for a mast, or make an objection?

A Neighbours and members of the public will have the opportunity to comment on a planning application through the normal planning process. This is done directly through the local planning authority and they will be able to advise on the processes they have in place to capture your comments.

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Q Will a mast get planning permission?

A We can not say for sure if a mast will achieve planning permission or not. All applications have to go through the planning process in the same way most other forms of development do. However, given the remote and rural nature of the masts, we anticipate a high level of scrutiny. The operators and their suppliers will work closely with planning departments to ensure applications have all the necessary information needed to make a fair and balanced decision.

Q How long will it take to get planning permission?

A There is no definitive answer to this question. Operators and their suppliers will work with local planning authorities to make sure all the relevant and necessary information is submitted as part of the planning application process. However, the local planning authority may ask for additional supporting information which can delay an application being processed and/or considered. The nature of the mast design and location can also lead to a local planning authority needing more time to consider an application given the number of potential stakeholders involved. We would advise anyone looking at a specific application to engage with the local planning authority to keep up to date on timescales.

Q Why can't you build a smaller, monopole style mast?

A One of the benefits of the Shared Rural Network is the reduced impact on the environment through the sharing of infrastructure. A monopole is not designed to hold the equipment of multiple operators. By building larger lattice style masts, all four operators are able to go on one mast, instead of needing four individual masts. Although a shared mast may be larger, it leaves a much smaller physical and carbon footprint than would be made by installing four sets of infrastructure in the same area.

Q Can you disguise the mast to look like a tree?

A There are occasions when masts can be disguised to look like trees, however, these require more materials to be added to the mast which in turn have an impact on the efficacy of the mast. As well as potentially impacting the effectiveness of the mast, there are also occasions where a tree would look more out of place than a mast. Other ways of blending the mast into the background can be looked at, including paint colours and the type of materials used around the site.

Q How will you access these masts?

A This will be determined by the location of the masts and what is around the area. There are many issues that must be considered when trying to access these rural and remote locations and they will all be taken into account when planning access. It may be that some are accessed via road or access track, in other instances it may require the use of helicopters to reach the location. All access details will be included in the planning application.

Q How will you power these masts?

A Each mast location is different and there will be different power supplies across the programme. Where possible the intention is to connect a mast to existing mains power line, however, there will be locations that are too far away from a mains line to connect to it. In these instances the mast will be powered by an off grid solution. Different types of off grid power sources are currently being looked at, including the use of renewable energy.

Q How long will it take to build the masts?

A Given the remote and rural locations of these masts it is hard to provide a specific time scale. Given the large variation of site conditions that can impact proceedings, each site will vary in how long it takes to build the mast. However, on average it is expected that the physical building of the mast may take 6 weeks to complete from the first day on site. Once a site is complete it will then take more time to activate it and make it go live. There are many factors that go into this stage and it is not possible to say how long each site will take to go live.

