



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA  
Department of Planning

## **A Guide for Telecommunications Facilities and Equipment**

You need planning permission and a building permit to construct or erect any type of telecommunications facility or equipment, erect any support structure or replace any support structure. The Bermuda Plan 2008 and the City of Hamilton Plan 2001 provide development regulations for telecommunications facilities. This Guidance Note gives additional assistance when preparing a planning application for any type of telecommunications facility or equipment.

### **Background**

It is in Bermuda's national interest to have a modern, sophisticated telecommunications network, which utilises up-to-date technology. In recent years advances in technology have resulted in an increase in demand for new telecommunications equipment. The proliferation of towers/antenna in a small urbanized island has raised concerns about the impact of those facilities on health and the environment. Whilst the Government is keen to promote the development of the telecommunications sector it must also take account of its responsibilities for safeguarding the health and safety of its citizens and for protecting the environment.

### **Health Considerations**

Every planning application for telecommunications facilities or equipment will be sent to the Department of Health. The Department of Health will review the application to ensure the relevant provisions of the FCC Regulations and local Health and Safety legislation are met. The Department of Planning will not recommend an application for approval unless it has the approval of the Department of Health.

### **Telecommunications Considerations**

Every planning application for telecommunications facilities or equipment will be sent to the Ministry of the Energy, Telecommunications and E-Commerce where it will be reviewed against their licensing requirements. The Ministry has produced a set of guidelines for RF Transmission Tower applications and it is expected that these guidelines will be followed in the formulation of any planning application for telecommunications equipment or facilities. The Department of Planning will not recommend an application for approval unless it has the approval of the Ministry of the Energy, Telecommunications and E-Commerce.

### **Environmental Considerations**

Telecommunications facilities have impacts on the neighbourhood from a health and safety perspective as well as visually. The environmental impact of telecommunications facilities is related to two main considerations; the scale of the structure and the increase in the number of facilities. In terms of scale, the structures that have the greatest impact are latticework towers. These tend to be much more visually prominent than other structures and can be seen over a wide area. Poles and antennas are of a smaller scale and therefore, their impact is generally limited to the local context.

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Whilst individually poles and antennas might have a lesser impact than large towers, there is justified concern that the proliferation of all types of telecommunications equipment has had a widespread adverse visual impact. This is exacerbated by the fact that the most suitable locations for telecommunications equipment tend to be prominent hilltops.

The telecommunications industry is constantly changing as new competitors and updated technology emerges. The industry is well established and has invested in infrastructure at the prime transmitting locations across the island. Controlling the number of new towers and antennas is directly linked to controlling the number of new sites where telecommunications facilities may be located.

The shared use of existing support structures (co-locating), at sites where equipment and facilities are already located, is viewed as the most appropriate way to decrease the number of telecommunications structures around the island.

New and innovative ways of ameliorating the impact of telecommunications facilities and equipment are emerging. Locating telecommunications equipment in the roof space of existing buildings, or disguising telecommunications equipment have been accepted methods of amelioration in Bermuda as well as other places. Appropriate amelioration methods will be encouraged on the island.

### **General Principles**

The following principles will be considered in the evaluation of any planning application for telecommunications facilities or equipment, support structure or the replacement of any support structure.

I. In assessing applications for new telecommunications facilities or equipment technical officers and the Development Applications Board must be satisfied that every effort has been made to use existing support structures, and in this regard, the replacement of an existing support structure, a new support structure or new telecommunications equipment will be at the discretion of the Board.

### **Environmental Considerations**

II. Applicants must make best efforts to co-locate. Any application for the replacement of an existing support structure or a new support structure or new telecommunications equipment or facilities will require written reasons why co-locating is not possible, and provide details of the capacity and willingness provided on the structure for co-locating.

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- III. Applications that involve the placement of telecommunications equipment or facilities on existing structures that are not support towers (i.e. on the roof top of a building) will require written reasons setting out why utilizing existing support towers in the vicinity is not possible and what the visual impact of the proposal will be.
- IV. Applications for the replacement of an existing support structure, a new support structure or new telecommunications equipment may be permitted at the discretion of the Board and the application will be evaluated in the context of the following considerations as outlined in Section 3, Chapter 12 Policy UTL.17 which states:
- (a) *“the location, scale, design and appearance of the development have a minimal impact on the surrounding area;*
  - (b) *the proposal does not have a detrimental impact on the health and safety of the surrounding area;*
  - (c) *the proposal does not have an adverse impact on aerial navigation and is supported by the Departments of Civil Aviation and Airport Operations;*
  - (d) *the development will not result in an over-intensification in the number of telecommunication towers in the immediate area;*
  - (e) *the applicant can demonstrate that every effort has been made to utilize or share an existing support structure; and*
  - (f) *the grounds in support of the application as submitted by the applicant justify the exercise of the Board’s discretion.”*