



**South Hams  
District Council**

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Mr A W and Mrs W P Holdstock  
8 Parklands  
Totnes  
Devon  
TQ9 5HQ

Our Ref: SD(C)/AR//VB  
Date: 11 March 2010

Dear Mr and Mrs Holdstock

**T Mobile phone mast, Babbage Road, Totnes  
South Hams Against Mobile Emissions (SHAME)**

Further to your letter of 25 February and my acknowledgement of 3 March, I have now had the opportunity to look into the issues you raise in the petition.

I understand the concern that local people have about the possible health issues from telecommunication masts, however the way that the Council dealt with this proposal followed national planning procedures and took account of government guidance in relation to both notification of local people and in relation to health issues. Indeed, despite the concern expressed about lack of consultation, the Council received a significant level of representation from local people before coming to a decision about the phone mast at Babbage Road.

As I suspect you are aware the Development Control Committee considered the proposal on 14 March 2007. The report to Members made reference to the health issues and noted national guidance that *"It is the government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health. In the government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary to a public authority in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them."* This advice was taken from Planning Policy Guidance 8 which was in force at the time that the proposal was being considered.

While the Council is sympathetic to your concerns, it is required to take account of government policy and guidelines in coming to a decision. Indeed, in August 2007 you complained to the Ombudsman that the Council failed to properly consider whether T-Mobile required 'prior approval' to erect the telecommunications mast and in deciding that prior approval was not required the Council was inconsistent in the application of local policies. The Ombudsman indicated that in such cases the Council's role and powers are limited and it is the government's intention that they should be. The Ombudsman also noted that although the application was suitable for consideration under the Council's



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Chief Executive - David Incoll

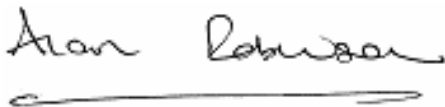


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scheme of delegated decision making, in view of the considerable volume of objections received, officers felt that it should be considered by the Development Control Committee to ensure that the issues you raise in the petition could be fully considered in a meeting open to the public. Furthermore, the Ombudsman agreed that Members had an appropriate officer report which outlined the proposals, relevant planning law, government guidance and local policies as well as knowledge of the objections, which largely related to health concerns. Having investigated the matter, the Ombudsman concluded that the proposal was properly considered by the Council.

While I accept that this letter is unlikely to overcome the concerns that are expressed in the petition, I hope it is helpful in explaining the Council's position. Given the strength of local feeling on this matter I will submit the petition and this response to the next Council meeting to ensure that all Members are aware of your concerns. I have also copied this response to Phil Norrey the Chief Executive at Devon County Council as you sent the petition to him, as well as key officers across this authority.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**Alan Robinson**  
**Strategic Director (Community)**

cc: David Incoll, Chief Executive  
Stephen Munday, Head of Development Management  
Ian Bollans, Head of Environmental Health  
Dean Kinsella, Senior Planning Officer  
Darryl White, Member Support Services Manager  
Phil Norrey, Chief Executive, Devon County Council