

# A Householder's Planning Guide

for the Installation of Antennas, including Satellite Dishes

Information Leaflet 13

Revised April 2011



# Introduction

This booklet is an outline of the planning regulations for antennas in Northern Ireland, and includes the Government's statement of good practice on where to place antennas. In this document, 'antennas' include satellite dishes.

Generally, most conventional TV aerials (including their mountings and poles) are not considered as being development, and they therefore do not require planning consent because they are considered to be *de minimis*.<sup>1</sup>

This document takes account of changes to the Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993 (the GDO) introduced by the Planning (General Development) (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2006 (the 2006 Order) and The Planning (General Development) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011.

## **This guide aims to do the following:**

- Explain what the regulations say about the number and the size of antennas allowed and where they should be placed.
- Offer guidance on the most appropriate places to site antennas to try to help protect our environment.
- Help retailers and installers provide appropriate advice and service to you on where to place antennas.

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<sup>1</sup> *de minimis* – the shortened version of 'de minimis non curat lex' – is a legal maxim roughly translated as "the law does not concern itself with trifles". It is a legal principle applied by the courts and, as such, is not described or dealt with in the Planning legislation. It is applied where a trifling infringement is brought to the attention of the court, but where the deviation is of so little consequence that, if continued, would weigh little or nothing in the public interest and might properly be overlooked. What is treated as *de minimis* is the decision of the courts based on the facts of the case. It is not within the gift of Planning Service to decide whether or where the principle should be applied, nor can the decision of the courts be anticipated in this way.

**Important Notes:**

Before you buy or rent an antenna, check whether you need planning permission, listed building consent, or permission from the landlord or owner.

You are responsible for placing antennas in the appropriate position. If you have any doubt about the position you have in mind, contact your local area planning office or get independent professional advice. There are eight local area planning offices plus a headquarters office. Addresses for each of these offices are provided at the end of this leaflet.

## Buying and Installing Antennas

- Check if you need planning permission or listed building consent.
- Check if you need the landlord's or owner's permission.
- Use reputable and authorised suppliers and installers.
- Try to choose an antenna that is:
  - no larger than that needed for good reception; and
  - within the specified size/volume<sup>2</sup> limits for your area and property.
- Try to place the antenna where it will:
  - be inconspicuous and, if possible, where it will not be seen by neighbours or the general public;
  - be unseen from the front of the house (preferably); and
  - blend in with the chosen background.

Respect the environment. The cheapest option may not always be the most appropriate one for you or the environment.

Don't forget that you are responsible for installing the antenna. If you do not place the antenna in the most appropriate position, the Department may demand that you position it elsewhere (at your own expense).

Satellite and antenna technology continues to change: you should be aware of the wide range of systems available so that you can make an informed choice.

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<sup>2</sup> The volume of the antenna should have a cubic capacity of no more than 35 litres

# Planning Regulations

Under the *Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993* (as amended), you have a general permission to install a specified number of antennas up to a specified size on property without the need for planning permission. This general permission depends on your house type and area. Your local area planning office can give you more advice.

This guide looks at permission for:

1. houses and buildings up to 15 metres in height;
2. houses and building up to 15 metres in height in designated areas
3. buildings of 15 metres in height or more; and
4. buildings of 15 metres in height or more in designated areas.

## Designated Areas

Designated areas are: -

- conservation areas;
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs);
- Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs); and
- National Parks
- World Heritage Sites

These are defined within Article 2(1) of the *Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993* (as amended).

## Listed Buildings

Some buildings are ‘listed’ because of their special historic or architectural interest. Your local area planning office can tell you whether the building is ‘listed’. If you live in a ‘listed building’ and want to install an antenna on that building, you generally need to apply for ‘listed building consent’. This consent is different from planning permission. You need listed building consent for any antenna that affects the character or appearance of a listed building or its setting.

## Houses and buildings of up to 15 metres in height

Unless your house (or the building in which you live) is in a designated area, you do **not** need to apply for planning permission to install an antenna on your property, as long as:

- there will be no more than two antennas on the property overall. (These may be on the front or back of the building, on the roof, attached to the chimney, or in the garden);
- if you are installing a single antenna, it is not more than 100 centimetres in any linear dimension<sup>3</sup> (not including any projecting feed element<sup>4</sup>, reinforcing rim, mounting and brackets);
- if you are installing two antennas, one is not more than 100 centimetres in any linear dimension, and the other is not more than 60 centimetres in any linear dimension (not including any projecting feed element, reinforcing rim, mounting and brackets);
- the cubic capacity<sup>5</sup> of each individual antenna is not more than 35 litres;
- an antenna fitted onto a chimney stack is not more than 60 centimetres in any linear dimension; and
- an antenna mounted on the roof only sticks out above the roof when there is a chimney-stack. In this case, the antenna should not stick out more than 60 centimetres above the highest part of the ridge tiles of the roof, or above the highest part of the chimney stack, whichever is the lower.

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<sup>3</sup> Linear dimension: This means taking the measurement in a straight line, starting from the edge of the antenna to the opposite edge of the antenna. The measurement should only include the antenna itself and not any attachment needed to fix it to the wall or roof, or connect it up to your equipment.

<sup>4</sup> Projecting feed element: In a dish antenna, the incoming signals are received by the dish which then 'reflects' the signal into a central 'feed horn'. This is usually positioned at a short distance (a few inches) away from the dish and held in place by a projecting arm or arms.

<sup>5</sup> Cubic capacity: This means the volume (the amount of in 3 dimensions) occupied by an object using known methods of measurement.

## Houses and buildings of up to 15 metres in height in designated areas

If your house (or the building in which you live) is in a designated area, you do **not** need to apply for planning permission to install an antenna on your property, as long as:

- there will be no more than two antennas on the property overall;
- if you are installing a single antenna, it is not more than 100 centimetres in any linear dimension (not including any projecting feed element, reinforcing rim, mounting and brackets);
- if you are installing two antennas, one is not more than 100 centimetres in any linear dimension, and the other is not more than 60 centimetres in any linear dimension (not including any projecting feed element, reinforcing rim, mounting and brackets);
- the cubic capacity of each individual antenna is not more than 35 litres;
- an antenna fitted onto a chimney stack is not more than 60 centimetres in any linear dimension;
- an antenna mounted on the roof only sticks out above the roof when there is a chimney-stack, in this case, the antenna should not stick out more than 60 centimetres above the highest part of the ridge tiles of the roof, or above the highest part of the chimney stack, whichever is the lower; and
- an antenna is not installed on a chimney, wall, or a roof slope which faces onto, and is visible from, a road. (If you are not sure, get advice from your local area planning office.)

## Buildings of 15 metres or more in height

Unless your building is in a designated area, you do **not** need to apply for planning permission to install an antenna on your property, as long as:

- there will be no more than four antennas on the building overall;
- the size of any antenna is not more than 130 centimetres in any linear dimension (not including any projecting feed element, reinforcing rim, mounting and brackets);
- the cubic capacity of each individual antenna is not more than 35 litres;
- an antenna fitted onto a chimney stack is not more than 60 centimetres in any linear dimension; and
- an antenna mounted on the roof does not stick out above the roof more than 300 centimetres above the highest part of the roof.

## Buildings of 15 metres or more in height in Designated Areas

If your building is in a designated area, you do **not** need to apply for planning permission to install a dish or other antenna on your property, as long as:

- there will be no more than four antennas on the building overall;
- the size of any antenna is not more than 130 centimetres in any linear dimension (not including any projecting feed element, reinforcing rim, mounting and brackets);

- the cubic capacity of each individual antenna is not more than 35 litres;
- an antenna fitted onto a chimney stack is not more than 60 centimetres in any linear dimension;
- an antenna mounted on the roof does not stick out above the roof more than 300 centimetres above the highest part of the roof; and
- an antenna is not installed on a chimney, wall, or roof slope which faces onto, and is visible from, a road. (If you are not sure, get advice from your local area planning office.).

If you live in a flat, these limits refer to the building as a whole and not to each separate flat.

If the number of dishes or antennas installed on the building has already reached the maximum allowed, you will need planning permission for further installations.

In this case, you may want to discuss with other residents the possibility of a shared system.

You are responsible for applying for planning permission. If necessary, you must get planning permission before you install an antenna.

Your supplier or installer may be able to give you advice on whether you need to apply for planning permission for installing an antenna in a particular place. If you are not sure, you should contact your local area planning office, who can provide application forms for planning permission.

# Guidance on Installations

## Advice on Good Siting

When installing a dish or other antenna, you must position it in such a way that its effect on the outside appearance of the building is reduced as far as possible. You must also remove it when you no longer need it.

### **What you need to consider:**

If an antenna is not positioned in the most appropriate place, this can make it more noticeable, or (depending on its colour and appearance) make it stand out from its background.

Remember, you are responsible for:

- choosing the type of antenna; and
- positioning the antenna on the building or in the garden.

When deciding on an antenna and where to position it, you should take into account its effect on neighbours, the public, and the environment. The retailer or installer may be able to give you advice on these matters. If there is any doubt, you should contact your local area planning office.

### **Things to think about**

For dish antennas, you should be aware of the importance of colour. For example, a white dish may blend against a white background but may be more obvious against darker backgrounds, such as brick or stone.

The materials or the design can also affect how suitable a particular antenna is. For example, a mesh or transparent dish may be less obvious than a solid one.

Where you position the antenna on the property is perhaps the most important thing to bear in mind when considering installing one. Although it is important to make sure your

antenna provides adequate reception, it is also important to consider the visual effect of your antenna, e.g.

- an antenna mounted on the roof will be less noticeable than one mounted on a wall;
- an antenna on a wall at the back of the building will usually be less noticeable than one on the front of the building;
- an antenna mounted close to the ground in the back garden will be less noticeable to neighbours than one mounted on a pole;
- an antenna hidden behind a parapet or a chimney stack may be less noticeable than one mounted on the wall.

### The Consequences of Poor Positioning

If your local area planning office thinks your antenna is in a poor position and could reasonably be moved to make it less noticeable, they may ask you to move it (at your own expense). You would not have to apply for planning permission.

If you refuse this request, your local planning office may -

- demand that you apply for planning permission (for which you must pay a fee) based on the fact that the antenna's effect on the outside appearance of the building has not been reduced as far as possible; or
- send you an enforcement notice demanding that you move the antenna.

You are entitled to appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission if DOE Planning refuses your application for planning permission, or sends you an enforcement notice. Reasons for an appeal could include that you think the chosen position of the antenna is appropriate, or that the measures you would need to take to move it are excessive, perhaps causing you unreasonable costs.

It is an offence not to follow an enforcement notice. You could have to pay a fine unless you have successfully appealed against it.

If your local area planning office asks you to move the antennas they should use these guidelines to show, on a diagram, what reasonable measures you can take. The Department cannot use this power to deny you the right to install an antenna.

**You should remove any antenna which you no longer need.**

## Choosing Suppliers and Installers

Suppliers and installers should be familiar with the planning and environmental aspects of installation.

We strongly advise you to get your antenna equipment from a reputable supplier, such as a member of the **Radio, Electrical and Television Retailers' Association (RETRA)**, other established companies or, where appropriate, from the broadcaster.

We also advise you to use installers who are members of the **Confederation of Aerial Industries Limited (CAI)** or other professionally qualified installers who follow an appropriate Code of Practice in line with this Planning Leaflet.

Reputable installers should have agreed standards for their work, in some cases guaranteed by their company; they should also be covered by public liability and employer's liability insurance.

You should get quotes for alternative siting options and costs (such as installing at the back) before installing an antenna.

# Guidance on siting your antenna



This illustration is for general guidance only. It shows the possible positions of antennas.

**This illustration does not apply to properties in designated areas**

LOCATION		GUIDANCE
Front elevation - garden	X	Not suitable – security concerns.
Front of the house – Ground floor level	X	Not suitable – highly visible from the street.
Front of the house – First floor level	✓	Suitable – less visible from the street.
Side of the house - front	✓	Suitable – less visible from the street.
Side of the house - back	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Roof-mounted – behind parapet	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Roof-mounted – over ridge tiles	✓	Suitable – less visible from street. Must only be installed if the premises have a chimney stack.
Eaves-mounted pole	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Chimney-mounted pole	X	Not suitable – higher than the chimney.
Chimney-mounted	✓	Suitable – not higher than the chimney.
Flat roof – front	X	Not suitable – visible from the street
Flat roof – back	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Side of the garage	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Rear extension – side of the house	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Rear extension – roof	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street.
Back garden – behind trees	X	Not suitable – tree may block signal.
Back garden – ground mounted	✓✓	Recommended – not visible from the street, but check that a signal can be obtained.
Back garden – pole mounted	X	Not suitable – visible to neighbours.

## Alternatives to Individual Antennas

If you live in:

- a tower block;
- a small block of flats;
- a terrace of houses; or
- a semi-detached house;

it may be possible to use shared antenna systems without the need for each household to install an individual antenna. There are several main alternatives to an individual antenna.

### Shared Reception Systems

Shared antenna systems are worth considering if:

- planning permission is unlikely to be granted for several antennas on a single building;
- a shared system would be more environmentally friendly than for each home to have its own antenna;
- landlords or owners have banned individual antennas.

If you live in a tower block or a large group of flats or houses, you should first check what arrangements, if any, have already been made for a shared system.

You should always get professional advice to make sure the system you have chosen offers the best choice of programmes at a reasonable price and with the ability to accommodate future services.

If you live in a semi-detached or terraced house, it may be possible to develop a shared system, although this may be more expensive than installing individual antennas. You may also need legal advice on the conditions for sharing. In any event,

you should make sure that any shared system provides access to all the programmes everyone wants.

The same planning regulations apply to shared antennas as apply to individual antennas.

The landlord or the building owner is responsible for deciding whether or not to allow the installation of a shared system. Any system installed should comply with the General Conditions of Entitlement. The General Conditions of Entitlement apply to anyone who provides an electronic communication service or an electronic communications network. It is important that providers understand the legal obligations which these conditions impose on them. Guidelines on the conditions are available from OFCOM and their address can be found at the end of this document.

## Cable Networks

Cable networks can be another way of bringing satellite TV or broadband to your home.

You may want to ask your local planning office whether your area is served by cable television. This is particularly important if:

- your home or building does not have a line-of-sight<sup>6</sup> with the relevant transmitter;
- planning permission for an antenna is not granted;
- a shared system is not practical;
- you do not want to have an antenna on the outside of your property.

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<sup>6</sup> Line of sight: Many antennas and all satellite antennas need to be able to receive signals from the transmitter without the signal being interrupted by trees or buildings etc. Antennas which do not have line-of-sight to the transmitter will not receive signals correctly and will not function properly.



	Local Planning Division DOE		
<b>Northern Area Planning Office Londonderry</b>	Orchard House 40 Foyle Street Londonderry Co. Derry BT48 6AT	101 (N.I Only)  (028) 9151 3101	(028) 7131 9777
	<a href="mailto:londonderry.planning@doeni.gov.uk">londonderry.planning@doeni.gov.uk</a>		
	Local Planning Division DOE		
<b>Northern Area Planning Office Coleraine</b>	County Hall Castlerock Road Coleraine Co.Londonderry BT51 3HS	101 (N.I Only) (028) 9151 3101	(028) 7034 1434
	<a href="mailto:coleraine.planning@doeni.gov.uk">coleraine.planning@doeni.gov.uk</a>		
	Local Planning Division DOE		
<b>Western Area Planning Office Omagh</b>	County Hall Drumragh Avenue Omagh Co. Tyrone BT79 7AF	101 (N.I Only)  (028) 9151 3101	(028) 8225 4009
	<a href="mailto:omagh.planning@doeni.gov.uk">omagh.planning@doeni.gov.uk</a>		
	Local Planning Division DOE		
<b>Western Area Planning Office Enniskillen</b>	County Buildings 15 East Bridge St Enniskillen Co. Fermanagh BT74 7BW	101 (N.I Only) (028) 9151 3101	(028) 6634 6550
	<a href="mailto:enniskillen.planning@doeni.gov.uk">enniskillen.planning@doeni.gov.uk</a>		

## Other useful addresses

### [Confederation of Aerial Industries Limited](#)

Communications House  
41a Market Street  
Watford  
Herts  
WD18 0PN

Telephone: 01923 803030 · Facsimile: 01923 803203 · Email [Office@cai.org.uk](mailto:Office@cai.org.uk)

### [Office of Electronic Communications \(OFCOM\)](#)

Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London  
SE1 9HA

Telephone 020 7981 3000

### [Radio, Electrical and Television Retailers' Association Ltd. \(RETRA\)](#)

Retra House  
St John's Terrace  
1 Ampthill Street  
Bedford  
MK42 9EY

Telephone: 01234 269 110  
E-mail: [retra@retra.co.uk](mailto:retra@retra.co.uk)

### [Planning Appeals Commission](#)

Park House  
87-91 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7AG

Telephone: (028) 9024 4710  
Fax: (028) 9031 2536  
E-mail: [info@pacni.gov.uk](mailto:info@pacni.gov.uk)