



**In Brief**

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**News**

**Tetra masts: councillors agonise over conflicting health advice**

"BETWEEN a rock and a hard place" was how Arun District Council leader Norman Dingemans described the council's position in considering applications for Tetra masts.



Conflicting government guidance notes issued to councils to help them decide whether or not to allow masts to be installed has prompted Arun to put all decisions on hold until further advice on health has been sought.

It is not yet known when the council will receive this advice.

Tetra, or Terrestrial Trunked Radio, is a new communications system developed by O2 Airwave for the emergency services which is hoped to be up and running in 2004.

There are 79 masts planned for West Sussex. But there are growing fears the high frequency transmissions could cause a range of serious illnesses in those living near the masts.

"There is no argument that the emergency services must have a system to communicate reliably. We support that principle whole-heartedly," said Mr Dingemans at a special press briefing held on Monday.

It's all down to two conflicting paragraphs in the government's planning policy guidelines. One says it's fine for the council to give the go-ahead to masts, provided they comply with government standards.

But the guidelines also say health considerations and public concern can, in principle, be material considerations in determining applications for planning permission and prior approval.

In other words, councils are told not to worry about health concerns, but are also told they should be considered.

"Our position does not appear to be as clear as we first thought," Mr Dingemans added.

The growing fears among Arun residents on the possible dangers of Tetra have been further fuelled by masts going up without planning permission.

Arun's head of planning, Howard Cheadle, said: "Airwave

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GREEN European MP Caroline Lucas is asking residents to raise their concerns about the controversial...  
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A FAMILY from Littlehampton, expecting quads, say the stress of finding a bigger home is putting th...  
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and the police agree the system should be operational by a set date.

"In order to do this, they are putting up masts and then applying for planning permission retrospectively."

Arun is seeking advice from the national chief medical officer and from Primary Care Trusts as well as the Government Office for the South East and the Home Office.

Mr Cheadle said the council was satisfied all advice would be impartial.

"We believe the requirement is to seek out health advice from recognised sources," he said.

Said anti-Tetra campaigner John O'Brien: "I am very pleased that Arun is taking it as seriously as one would expect the local council to do.

"One hopes that the clarification would come from organisations who do not have a vested interest in supporting it."

24 October 2003

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