

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

1. Site Details

Site Name:	Heugh Hall Farm	Site Address:	LAND AT HEUGH HALL FARM, BOWBURN, DURHAM, COUNTY DURHAM, DH6 5NJ
National Grid Reference:	E 431365 N 538611		
Site Ref Number:	10885622	Site Type: ¹	Macro

2. Pre Application Check List

Site Selection (for New Sites only)

(Would not generally apply to upgrades/alterations to existing site including redevelopment or replacement of an existing site to facilitate an upgrade or sharing with another operator)

Was a local planning authority mast register available to check for suitable sites by the operator or the local planning authority?		No
If no explain why:		
No up to date register available.		
Were industry site databases checked for suitable sites by the operator:	Yes	
If no explain why:		

Site Specific Pre-application consultation with local planning authority


Was there pre-application contact:	Yes
Date of pre-application contact:	21/06/2023
Name of contact:	N/A
Summary of outcome/Main issues raised:	
Pre-application consultation letter, consultation plan and a copy of the site plans w to the Chief Planning Officer on 13/06/2023. LPA acknowledgement was 21/06/2023 with information regarding paid pre-application service.	

¹ Macro or Micro

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Annual area wide information to planning authority

Has annual area wide information been provided	No
If no explain why:	
<p>Summary issues raised:</p> <p>Cornerstone’s commercial relationship with Virgin Media O2 (VMO2) has changed, effectively increasing their independence to work with other companies in the deployment of infrastructure. It means they no longer have visibility of Telefonica’s full update plan. However, Cornerstone is fully committed to working closely with Local Planning Authorities and following best practice guidance.</p> <p>Cornerstone aims to engage and work with the planning department at the earliest opportunity from when they are instructed to deliver new infrastructure within the Authority area and often conduct strategic pre-rollout engagement meetings to discuss the wider rollout. If your Local Authority would like a meeting to discuss wider Cornerstone rollout plans then please advise. We recognise the importance of developing partnerships and will always work with you to deliver improved mobile connectivity.</p>	

Community Consultation

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model:	Red	Amber	Green
Outline of consultation carried out:			
<p>Pre-application consultation letters and a copy of the site plans were sent to the local councillors for Coxhoe (Jan Blakey, Gary Hutchinson and Maura McKeon), City of Durlingham MP (Mary Foy) and Cassop Parish Council Clerk on 13/06/2023.</p>			
Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of relevant correspondence):			
<p>Response received from Cllr Hutchinson in acknowledgement of the consultation. No other comments received to date.</p>			


School/College

Location of site in relation to school/college (include name of school/college):
No schools nearby.
Outline of consultation carried out with school/college (include evidence of consultation):

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N/A
Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of main correspondence)
N/A

Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for Defence or the operator of the civil safeguarding area or defence safeguarding area notification (only required for an application for prior approval)

Will the proposed development be on a civil safeguarding area or a defence safeguarding area?		No
Has the Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for Defence/operator of the civil safeguarding area or defence safeguarding area been notified?		No
Details of response:		
N/A		


Developer's Notice

Copy of Developer's Notice enclosed?	Yes
Date served:	Developer's notice, covering letter and site plan sent to landowner on 10/11/2023. Notice and plan of delivery attached as part of this application.

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3. Proposed Development

The proposed site:

Background:

Cornerstone is the UK's leading mobile infrastructure services company. They manage and own over 20,000 sites and are committed to enabling best in class connectivity for over half of all the country's mobile customers. They oversee works on behalf of telecommunications providers and wherever possible aim to:

- promote shared infrastructure
- maximise opportunities to consolidate the number of base stations
- significantly reduce the environmental impact of network development

As part of Cornerstone's network improvement programme, VMO2 is in the process of progressing a number of suitable sites for radio base stations, which will provide improved 3G and 4G coverage and new 5G service provision. This is fully in line with the Government's aim to ensure that everyone is connected to the superhighway.


The proposed works comprise the removal of the existing 15m monopole with associated equipment. The installation of a replacement 20m high monopole with 6 No. antennas, 1 RRUs, 2 No. 300mm dishes and 1 No. 600mm dish. All other works within the existing equipment cabin.

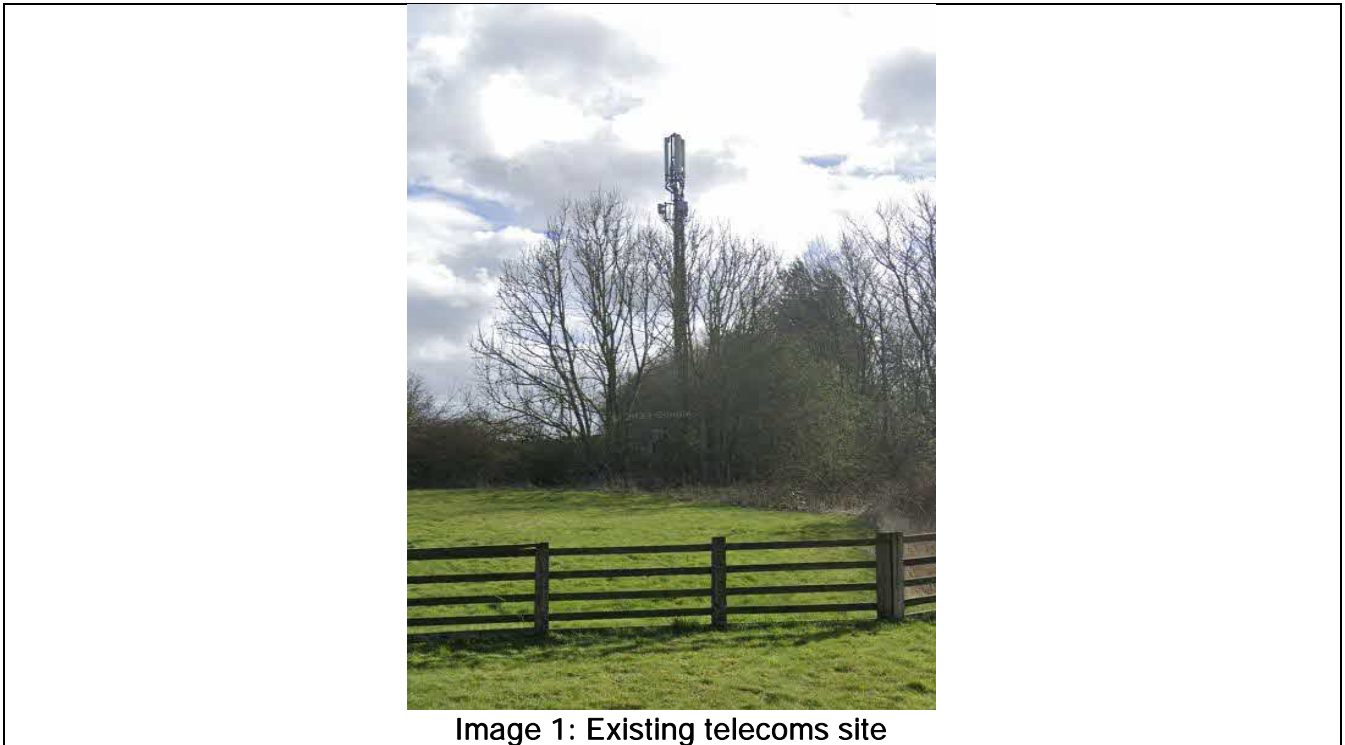
The site is located within the rural landscape to the east of the small settlement of Bowburn. The A1 motorway continues north and south, running along the east side of Bowburn. A farm track separates the settlement from the rural landscape. A farmhouse and other agricultural buildings are located to the east of the site, with a dense woodland area. Agricultural fields are located to the south of the site, lined by large mature trees which form the perimeter from the A1 by approximately 30m. The trees nearest to the site extend approximately 13m, however others further north and south along the field perimeter are taller. The nearest residential properties are located within the Bowburn area to the west of the opposite side of the A1 and as such are not in view of the site. Further east beyond the agricultural land is Old Quarrington quarry, with the settlement of Coxhoe further to the south.

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Enclose map showing the cell centre and adjoining cells if appropriate:


The operator is seeking to improve coverage speed increased traffic experienced by the operator’s existing sites in the Durham area. This radio base station is therefore required to enable enhanced 4G coverage and cap Coxhoe area, as well as new 5G services for VMO2 and Vodafone to ensure high quality customer experience is obtained as demands on the network increase and technology change.

Type of Structure (e.g. tower, mast, etc): 20m Phase 6 monopole	
Description:	
Removal of the existing 15m monopole with associated equipment. The installation replacement 20m high monopole with 6 No. antennas, 15 No. RRUs, 2 No. 300mm dishes and 1 No. 600mm dish. All other works within the existing equipment cabin.	
Overall Height: 20m	
Height of existing building (where applicable):	N/A
Equipment Housing:	

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Length:	Metres
Width:	Metres
Height:	Metres
Materials (as applicable):	
Tower/mast etc – type of material and external colour:	Steel – Galvanised (grey)
Equipment housing – type of material and external colour:	As existing

Reasons for choice of design, making reference to pre-application responses:

The existing radio base station has been in situ in this location for many years and has become an established feature in the landscape. Technology advances (including 5G service provision) and additional demands on the operator's mobile network system in this area have meant that additional antennas need to be installed to facilitate all the services that are required to be carried for mobile superfast broadband. This enables customers to continue to be able to use their handheld devices for the purposes in which they have become accustomed, and now rely on in the modern world we live in, a similar scenario to the reliance on gas and electricity.

However, these new technologies for the latest 4G and 5G service provision and the size and weight of the antennas required for them means that the existing tower is not able to support this new technology and therefore a replacement tower is required to ensure that the latest technologies can be provided to the surrounding area in and around Coxhoe. The amendments to the existing scheme are essential in order that customer's handheld devices can continue to operate for the purposes in which they have become accustomed, accessible wherever they are whether that is indoors or outside.


Therefore, a replacement mast is required to host the upgraded 6 no. new VMO2 antennas and ancillary equipment, including the 15 no. new RRUs and 3 no. transmission dishes. In order to host the upgraded telecommunications equipment which will provide improved 4G and 5G coverage and capacity and new 5G coverage to the surrounding area, the mast requires a headframe wider than the existing mast. As such, the proposed replacement mast is a monopole structure similar to those found in more densely developed areas. If the replacement column was a wider, lattice style structure, at a greater height and with the wider headframe, the installation would be a far more significant impact on amenity and far more prominent than the existing mast which has been in situ for many years.

The site benefits from the large mature trees surrounding the site which line the A1 motorway and help to minimise the impact of the mast on the surrounding area, particularly the nearest residential settlement of Bowburn. The surrounding trees rise to approximately 10m height and the replacement monopole will assimilate with the trees due to its slimline nature similar to the existing. The replacement needs to be slightly bigger in order to support the latest technologies and the high-speed data and capacity needed for customers' handheld devices to continue to operate for the purposes in which they were purchased. However, this

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replacement mast will also enable the sharing of operators in the future, in line with the sequential approach outlined within the NPPF.

For technical reasons, the replacement column is unable to be located in exactly the same position as the existing monopole. As a result, the new mast will be situated a few metres to the west, remaining in the existing compound. The existing equipment cabinet on the existing concrete base is to remain in position and accommodate the new equipment required. The concrete base will be extended on its west side to support the new monopole, due to the mast being slightly thicker than the existing.

The proposed height at 20m is essential in order to provide sufficient coverage and capacity to the target coverage area, enabling the antennas to clear the nearby tree canopy. The latest 4G and 5G radio technologies operate in higher frequency bands than previous technologies. Since they operate at higher frequencies where attenuation of the radio signal is naturally higher and the effects of clutter are greater, it will normally require a taller structure to achieve the same coverage footprint. To increase capacity and data speeds for the user, the antenna will normally need to be mounted higher than conventional antennas. These factors drive a requirement for an increase in antenna height for the latest 4G and 5G service provision.

The proposed height is also required as the site proposes the relocation of the existing 1 no. transmission dishes and installation of 2 no. new transmission dishes. Transmission dishes need a clear line of sight to other dishes in the network to allow them to work effectively.

The antennas are proposed to remain open and not shielded as this provides the best service provision to the surrounding area. If the antennas were to be shrouded, they would not be as efficient at providing the latest technologies to the surrounding area. Thus, an additional installation would likely be required in this cell area which would lead to a proliferation of masts contrary to the NPPF. Given the site location within a rural area surrounded by vast open land, this loss in service provision if the antennas were to be shielded would not be justified. As such, the replacement monopole and antennas are designed to resemble the existing apparatus, particularly the upper section, as far as possible whilst providing the latest high quality, reliable service provision to this area at Coxhoe.


The proposed equipment within the existing fenced compound will be within the existing green equipment cabinet. The colouring of the monopole and antennas will be similar to the existing which has been in situ for many years, however this can be changed to any colour deemed appropriate by the LPA. The equipment cabinets constitute permitted development on their own right but are included in the application description and on the drawings for the site. Similarly, the fence constitutes permitted development under A.5 of Part 16 of the GPDO.

The proposed RRUs are very small (approximately the size of a shoe box) and will be located beneath the antennas on the proposed tower. Given their small size and the height of the proposed tower, it is not considered that they will be overly prominent when viewed from public vantage points at ground level. This element of the proposal constitutes

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development and does not require permission in its own right, but is noted in the description and on the drawings for clarity.

It is therefore considered that the proposal before you strikes a good balance between environmental impact and operational considerations. The proposed heights represent the best compromise between the visual impact of the proposal on the surrounding area and meeting the operator's technical requirements for the site. Taking all matters into account it is considered that this upgraded installation, on an established radio base site, to enable the enhancement of 2G, 3G, 4G and new 5G service provision, will appear out of place within its surroundings and would provide enhanced high quality, reliable and secure coverage and capacity, delivering the capability for a multi hi tech service.

Health and Safety - including ICNIRP compliance

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Declaration attached (below)

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection public compliance is determined by mathematical calculation and implemented by careful location of antennas, access restrictions and/or barriers and signage as necessary. Members of the public can unknowingly enter areas close to the antennas where exposure may exceed the guidelines.

When determining compliance, the emissions from all mobile phone network operators near to the site are taken into account.

In order to minimise interference within its own network and with other radio networks, VMO2 Ltd operates its network in such a way the radio frequency power outputs are kept at the lowest levels commensurate with effective service provision.

As part of VMO2's network, the radio base station that is the subject of this application will be configured to operate in this way.


All operators of radio transmitters are under a legal obligation to operate those transmitters in accordance with the conditions of their licence. Operation of transmitters in accordance with the conditions of the licence fulfils the legal obligations in respect of interference to other radio systems, other electrical equipment, instrumentation, or air traffic services. The conditions of the licence are mandated by Ofcom, an agency of the government, who are responsible for the regulation of the civilian radio spectrum. The remit of Ofcom also includes investigation and remedy of any reported significant interference.

The telecommunications infrastructure the subject of this application accords with all relevant legislation and as such will not cause significant and irremediable interference to other radio systems, electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest.

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4. Technical Justification

Enclose predictive coverage plots if appropriate, e.g. to show coverage improvement. Proposals to improve capacity will not generally require coverage plots.

Reason(s) why site required e.g. coverage, upgrade, capacity


A mobile phone transmitter is designed to cover a specific area and links its coverage to the next site in the network, creating a patchwork of overlapping coverage 'cells' across the country. So, if a person is on the move, the network will transfer their calls from one site to the next. However, in certain areas there will be gaps between these cells, resulting in a loss of coverage. This can be for a variety of reasons, the most common being tall buildings which block the path of the signal. The operators' network rollout programme is designed to identify and address these gaps within their coverage and ensure that users can use their phones whenever and wherever they are.

There is a specific requirement to upgrade the existing radio base station at this location to enable VMO2 and Vodafone to enhance its 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity in the area around Coxhoe whilst also providing new 5G service provision to the local area. This ensures that high quality service provision is maintained.

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5. Site Selection Process

Alternative sites considered and not chosen (not generally required for **upgrades/alterations to existing sites** including redevelopment of an existing site to facilitate an upgrade or sharing with another operator).

In accordance with the licence obligations and advice in the National Plan Framework and the Code of Best Practice in England the applicant's network rollo investigated the following siting and design options using this sequential approach to site selection:

- Upgrading their own existing base stations;
- Using existing telecommunications structures belonging to another communications operator. i.e. Mast and/ or site sharing, co-location;
- Installations on existing high buildings or structures including National Grid pylons;
- Using small scale equipment; and finally
- Erecting a new ground based mast site – (1st) Camouflaging or disguising equipment. (2nd) A conventional installation e.g. a lattice mast and compound.

The applicant's site selection strategy is to keep the overall environmental impact to a minimum Utilising existing masts is always progressed where it is technically and legally possible and where it is the local planning authority's preferred environmental solution. New sites are only developed where there are no viable or accessible alternatives or it is the local authority's preferred approach. The feasibility of the acquisition, build and maintenance of site also needs to be taken into account.


In accordance with the above sequential approach, the proposal is to replace the existing base station in this location.

Site Type	Site name and address	National Grid Reference	Reason for not choosing site

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If no alternative site options have been investigated, please explain why:

This is an upgrade to an existing site.

Land use planning designations:

N/A

Additional relevant information (include planning policy and material considerations):

National Planning Guidance

Planning policy is provided at the national level by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is a material consideration in planning decisions.

It is not necessary to quote extensively from this document but the following is highlighted.

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

The government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in July 2021, in order to strengthen section including requirements on improved design quality, a new requirement for produce local design codes or guides, an emphasis on using trees in new developments, revised policies on plan-making, removing statues and opting out of PD rights related to residential conversions.


The Government's latest thinking continues to strongly support communications infrastructure. The NPPF remains very supportive of high quality communications. Indeed, a whole chapter is dedicated to high quality communications, emphasising the importance that the Government attaches to digital connectivity. Paragraph 114 states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. This wording echoes guidance set out in paragraph 42 of the 2012 version of NPPF. However, it also includes the importance of *reliable* communications infrastructure for both economic growth *and social well-being*.

The NPPF continues to support the expansion of electronic communications infrastructure. Paragraph 114. It notes that policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered.

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upgraded over time. The economic and social benefits of providing high quality and reliable communications infrastructure are well documented and can be found in the Supporting Information Statement.

The NPPF makes reference to 5G:

‘Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G)..’

With the above in mind, the Government is already forward thinking the evolution of data networks and seeks planning decisions to take account of this. 5G technology offers increased speed of data and more capacity in the network, to ensure that handheld devices can continue to be used for the purposes in which they were purchased. This will bring even greater economic and social benefits to the area.

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF retains the requirement to minimise the number of installations consistent with the efficient operation of the network but also includes being consistent with the needs of consumers and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion.

Paragraph 118 of the NPPF retains the guidance set out in paragraph 46 of the 2012 version which relates to determining applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection guidelines for public exposure.

At the heart of the NPPF is the retained presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11). For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless the application contravenes policies within the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the revised Framework taken as a whole.

The NPPF continues to provide guidance on decision-making. At paragraph 38 it states that

‘Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including..permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible’.


The NPPF builds on the aspiration to build a strong, competitive and resilient economy. It states:

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'Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the support economic growth and productivity, taking in to account both local needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken, should each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be leader in driving innovation⁴² . . .

Footnote 42 of the NPPF states:

'The Government's Industrial Strategy sets out a vision to drive growth across the UK, identifies a number of Grand Challenges facing all nations, and a delivery programme to make the UK a leader in four of these: artificial intelligence and big data; clean growth; future mobility and catering for an ageing society. HM Government (2017) Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future'.

Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England (March 2022)

Now, more than ever, reliable digital connectivity is essential for people and businesses. The Government have committed to extending mobile geographical coverage across the UK. In order to realise these ambitions, it is essential that the planning system can effectively support the deployment of new mobile infrastructure, as well as network upgrades.

The [Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#), and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have issued an updated Code of Best Practice which sets out new guidance to further support the deployment of 5G coverage nationally. This Code provides guidance to mobile network operators, their agents and contractors and equally to all local planning authorities in England. It supersedes the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development (2016).

In line with the previous revision of the Code, digital connectivity is identified as being essential to enable people to stay connected and for businesses to grow. The principal aim of this Code is to continue to ensure Government's objective of supporting high quality communications infrastructure, which is key to continued economic prosperity and social inclusion for all.


Principles and Commitment

Paragraph 8 of the revised Code reiterates that fast, reliable digital connectivity can deliver economic, social and well-being benefits for the whole of the UK. The Code continues to acknowledge that as the demand for mobile data in the United Kingdom is increasing rapidly it is important that everyone can have access to dependable and consistent coverage where they live, work and travel.

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The Government recognises the role of Planning in delivering the need, in a sustainable and well-designed way, especially as households and business become increasingly reliant on mobile connectivity. Paragraph 13 of the Code continues to echo the NPPF guidance in strongly supporting high quality communications infrastructure which is seen as essential for sustainable economic growth. More specifically that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications network including next generation mobile technologies (such as 5G) in order to support economic growth across the country.

Given the economic importance of mobile connectivity, the revised Code further emphasises the need for Local Planning Authorities to support the deployment of digital infrastructure. Paragraph 18 states that Local Planning Authorities should demonstrate their support by:

Incentivising connectivity: support the expansion of telecommunications network and take a 'joined-up' approach to the wireless infrastructure planning process including ensuring that Local Plans effectively support the deployment of wireless infrastructure.

Facilitating sites: engage with operators when new sites have been proposed and discuss site requirements.

Engagement with operators: respond positively to requests for engagement and make decisions in line with national policy and Local Plans. For planning applications, provide solutions to issues and ensure timely decisions are made.

Information and communication: ensure that members of the public can access information about any development proposals within their local area. Send responses to communications promptly to an appropriate operator contact (or their representatives).

The added emphasis on support from Local Planning Authorities in the deployment of digital infrastructure is even more evident in the revised code. The Code recognises the importance of collaboration and partnership to help drive network coverage across the country. It goes on to state that 'In all instances, it is important for all parties involved in the process to take a positive approach to consultation and engagement'.

Siting and Design Principles


In line with this, is the recognition to continue to ensure that the impact of development is kept to a minimum. The Code states that good siting and design principles should continue to apply to all wireless network development and take into account any site-specific considerations and context, both of which can create better places in which to live and work and help make development acceptable to communities.

The Code provides guidance on siting and appearance principles. It sets out several principles in respect of telecommunications development and acknowledges that the options for design used by an operator will be affected by site conditions and requirements to link the site to the network, landscape features and coverage and appearance requirements.

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Paragraphs 25 - 27 sets out siting and site selection principles which Operators should consider including:

Installation on existing buildings and structures;
Erecting new ground based masts;
Camouflaging or disguising equipment where appropriate;
Using small scale equipment (although small cells themselves are generally address capacity issues as opposed to providing coverage); and
Mast and/or site sharing (including redevelopment of a site to enable sharing with another operator).

Key Technical and Operational Considerations

Taking the above into consideration the Code acknowledges the needs and constraints of a proposed site and the potential development (Paragraph 26). These constraints are set out in detail in the section ‘Operational Considerations’ of the Code. The three key technical and operational considerations for installation sites are:

- **Coverage:** wireless infrastructure needs to provide an appropriate level of coverage over the intended geographical area. This involves ensuring that a site is elevated sufficiently (often via masts) to provide clear lines of sight for signals.
- **Capacity:** where existing network infrastructure can no longer meet the demand for network capacity in a particular area, additional sites may be required in the coverage area to meet the demand. This is more likely to be required in populated areas or areas of high footfall.
- **Backhaul:** the radio access network requires a connection to the core network. Backhaul is sometimes provided by a microwave link, which requires a clear line of sight between the two ends of the link.

The Code emphasizes the need for Local Planning Authorities to take account of constraints, on network deployment and siting and design, when considering proposals in relation to the introduction of 5G network deployment. The Code acknowledges the requirement of additional equipment to provide necessary coverage and capacity.


Paragraph 66 states that 5G will require a denser network of base stations than previous generations, including more fixed line fibre optic cable for reliable and high speed backhaul. The siting of 5G installations will be more constrained and guided by these special technical and operational considerations.

Paragraph 67 goes on to note that because of the scale and technological constraint of 5G equipment, previous camouflage design solutions, such as tree mast designs and concealed antennas in flagpoles, may not be practicable or suitable. In these cases, simple designs with

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particular attention to colouration and finishes may help reduce visual impact: specific basis.

The revised Code illustrates that mobile connectivity helps in the delivery of public e.g. to access Central and Local Government via online services, acknowledging are more likely to be saved when a 999 call is made from a mobile than from a landline. Telehealth is becoming increasingly important and text message reminders also compliance with medication and keeping NHS appointments.

Good mobile connectivity also promotes sustainability e.g. it reduces the need to travel and thus carbon emissions. The Code continues to support mobile telecommunications as it is seen as a crucial piece of national infrastructure in economic, community and other terms.

The Code reiterates that the digital infrastructure must be achieved in a timely and efficient manner, and in a way which balances connectivity imperatives and community and social benefits that this brings with the environmental considerations that can be associated with such development. Great emphasis is placed on the collaborative working between stakeholders to ensure key digital network developments are therefore supporting economic growth.

UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy (April 2023)

The UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, published in April 2023 aims to set out the objectives that have been set out by the UK Government. The next decade will see seismic changes both in terms of what wireless connectivity can deliver and how we can use it. The economic and social benefits from these changes promise to be vast, from supercharging productivity and accelerating our transition to net zero. But these benefits can only be realised through concerted action from government, industry, and others. This strategy sets out the Government plan to do that.

In the last 5 years, UK government policies have driven impressive progress in the deployment of world class fixed and wireless networks across the whole of the UK, removing real and practical barriers to deliver stronger growth, more jobs, and better public services in every corner of the country.


Through our £1 billion deal with the mobile network operators, we are supporting rural communities by ensuring that 95% of the UK landmass have 4G coverage by 2025. This currently stands at 92%

we have made substantial progress with 5G, too. Last year, we met our ambition for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027 5 years early through the deployment of basic, non-standalone 5G using existing 4G networks to deliver increased network capacity.

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By building world-class, secure digital infrastructure networks, the Government can realise the vision they set out in their Digital Strategy for a competitive and innovative digital economy. This will play an important role in:

underpinning other new technologies - the next decade will see the development and maturation of transformative technologies from AI and self-driving vehicles to digital twins, which will drive demand for advanced wireless connectivity.

transforming public services - there are also significant benefits for improving public services, supporting smart cities which are cleaner and less congested, delivering connectivity to our schools and hospitals that will provide better interactive lessons and personalised healthcare.

By transforming our economy, widespread adoption of 5G can bring a cumulative productivity benefit of £159 billion by 2035, driving growth and inward investment, improving lives for communities in every corner of the country.

However, there are challenges we need to address to ensure the UK can realise these benefits, as the economics of investing in wireless networks are changing:

There is still a need to overcome uncertain demand for 5G-enabled services and continuing practical barriers to network deployment need to be overcome.

Many of the economic benefits we have identified require significant quality connectivity that is likely to be deployed in national public networks.

5G roll-out in the near term is likely to focus on urban areas, where the commercial returns are more certain.

Research we commissioned shows significant variation in the quality of 5G coverage in different parts of the country over the next decade - economically important areas like Freeports and industrial parks could be underserved.

Market dynamics are also changing:


Demand is uncertain as connectivity moves beyond smartphones to enable an array of new, innovative use cases, businesses and the public sector will need to navigate an increasingly complex ecosystem to get the connectivity they need. As many businesses and local authorities do not yet clearly understand the benefits 5G offers or how they can effectively deploy 5G-enabled services to realise these benefits, there is no clear articulation of the demand for high-quality services. In turn, this makes it more challenging for providers to make the business case for investment.

Through this strategy, the UK government set out a new policy framework with 6 key strands to do just that, and ensuring that the UK maximises the potential of advanced wireless networks.

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over the next decade, securing our international competitiveness for the future and economic growth across the UK.

1. Ensuring good connectivity for all

As networks are upgraded with 5G technologies over the next decade, 4G will continue to play an important, albeit diminishing, role in providing mobile connectivity across the UK.

Coverage reporting also needs to improve so that it more accurately reflects consumers' actual experience, equipping them with the information they need to choose their contract. In turn, we expect this to drive further commercial investment to address previously unidentified gaps - ensuring that people and businesses get the connectivity they need, whether to start and grow a business or to have a remote healthcare appointment.

2. Setting a bold 2030 ambition

Given the substantial potential that 5G offers for businesses and public service delivery, we are setting out a bold vision for the next generation of our national networks to drive investment across our economy. We want to move beyond the basic 5G that is being deployed now over 4G networks to build higher quality, standalone 5G networks that rely on older infrastructure. We also want to extend 5G coverage well beyond major towns to all populated areas of the UK, including rural villages and communities.

We are therefore setting a new headline ambition for the UK to have nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas by 2030 (*emphasis added*).

3. Strengthening the investment climate

While the government already has a range of policies in place to drive forward deployment of digital infrastructure, our 2030 ambition requires significant investment.

This includes:

Continuing to remove practical barriers to the deployment of 5G infrastructure.


4. Realising the full benefits of 5G

We want people, business and public services across the UK to realise the full benefits of 5G and advanced wireless connectivity. However, without concerted action, this will be limited and materialise only for larger businesses, in fewer sectors, and in certain geographies.

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Supporting places to attract investment: we set out how we will drive greater opp for industry and public service providers to be empowered customers for future conr solutions—supporting places to attract investment and encouraging adoption of 5G services.

We will do this by:

Driving local leadership and coordination and encouraging local authoriti the UK to employ digital champions to provide strategic leadership for lo authorities' own digital infrastructure strategies.

There are 5 chapters which outline the aims and ambitions, along with government are going to take in order to achieve their set targets and provide imprc connectivity for all.

Chapter 1 - *Approach and scope*

This strategy sets out a policy framework to help deliver the gove the economy and to ensure the UK benefits from advances in wireless connectivi next decade.

Chapter 2 – *Ensuring good connectivity across rural and urban areas*

The government's priority to build a better, more secure, more includes a clear commitment to grow the economy, and create better-paid jobs an opportunity right across the country. To do this, it is vital that people who live and work in al parts of the UK, including in rural areas, have access to good quality mobile and broa c coverage.

Chapter 3: *Our 2030 ambition*


World-class digital infrastructure underpins the digital economy – it was worth £143 billion in 2021, accounting for 5% of the national workforce. This infrastructure provides the bac of the UK economy and society with ever more jobs, public services and societal interactio built upon its foundations. As growth in the digital sector is nearly six times faster than the economy as a whole, its importance will only continue to increase as we deliver the Minister's priority of growing the economy.

4G technology revolutionised the way people use their mobile phones. 1 considered normal, a decade ago was ground-breaking. We have seen the grov streaming services, like Netflix and Spotify, and gained constant access to high quality r- produced content for free on platforms like YouTube, transformed the way we sho travel around cities through access to apps like Uber and Bolt and use public service as booking NHS appointments through apps.

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The Evolution of 5G

While 4G will continue to play an important role in providing widespread connectivity to consumers through public cellular networks across the UK's landmass, 5G offers significantly better performance and support a far greater range of use cases. 5G enables data transfer speeds of more than 10 times faster than 4G, has the potential for lower latency and greater reliability and the ability to connect more devices. The implications of these improvements reach far beyond the potential to develop the capabilities of smartphones, enabling an array of innovative use cases and providing for transformative economic, and social benefits that were perhaps unimaginable a decade ago.

The government's ambition for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G network by 2027 has been met early through the deployment of basic, or non-stand alone, 5G which is built on a 4G core network. While this has helped MNOs increase the capacity of their networks in more densely populated areas, it does not reflect the full functionality that can be delivered.

Without clear action, the market for advanced 5G services will remain nascent. Both business and public services do not yet fully understand the benefits or how to navigate the supplier ecosystem for 5G enabled digital products, applications and services.

We want high quality coverage to extend well beyond cities and large populated areas of the UK, including villages and rural communities. ***We are therefore setting a stretching new ambition of nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas of the UK by 2030 (emphasis added).***

Chapter 4: *Strengthening the investment environment*

Our 2030 ambition requires commercial investment, and this chapter focuses on creating an investment environment to support it.

The deployment of standalone 5G and ultimately advanced 5G will require operators to invest in additional infrastructure, including:

- 5G core networks in addition to the 5G equipment in the radio access network
- upgrades to the existing grid of approximately 18,000 macro cell sites per MNO
- additional cell sites to provide 'infill' to cover gaps in coverage


Addressing barriers to deployment

Since the publication of the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review, the government has taken significant strides to make it quicker and easier for operators to roll out 5G.

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infrastructure including making reforms to the planning system to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage in England.

Chapter 5 – *Realising the full benefits of 5G and advanced wireless connectivity*

5G and other forms of advanced wireless connectivity pave the way for new services and applications that can have a transformative effect on our public services, businesses and local economies, delivering this government's priority of growing the economy and creating better paid jobs. Wireless connectivity can support mobile healthcare, autonomous connected vehicles, improve traffic flow through our cities and enable our factories to be more productive, supporting the fourth industrial revolution. Our evidence is clear that the most significant economic benefits from 5G will come from widespread adoption of advanced 5G by industrial sectors, including manufacturing and logistics, and other services.

The government is determined that the UK should take full advantage of these opportunities but this will only be possible if places across the country can attract commercial investment in 5G and other forms of advanced wireless connectivity and for that to be adopted at scale by businesses and public services.

Connected Places

Improving digital connectivity is one of the government's Levelling Up Missions. We want to help places and communities across the UK to share in the benefits of good connectivity, enrich lives and driving local growth.

We want to support connected places with their digital connectivity ambitions. **We will do this by helping regions and local authorities to build the case for adopting new technologies, attracting investment and removing practical barriers to the deployment of wireless networks** (*emphasis added*). Local and regional authorities play a pivotal role in facilitating the rollout of wireless connectivity and their role will become more crucial ever as investment in 5G continues, due to its technological complexity and the vast range of new applications and services it can support.


Local Leadership and Coordination

Local leadership can help to identify and break down barriers to deployment at a local level by bringing together stakeholders across the public sector and building strong relationships with industry. The installation of telecoms infrastructure involves a number of different local government departments (such as *planning*, estates, *highways*) and their activities can be siloed and uncoordinated.

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It is essential that, at a leadership level, local and regional authorities recognise the importance of wireless connectivity and identify decision-makers within the organisation who are empowered to facilitate private sector investment.

Chapter 6: *Driving adoption in key economic sectors*

Adoption of 5G-enabled use cases in sectors such as healthcare, transport & manufacturing and agriculture will drive economic growth and productivity across delivering our priority of economic growth.

Key features of 5G for industry Dedicated 5G networks can enable:

data analytics: Utilising operational and environmental sensor data to make real-time decisions about equipment and operational performance.

video surveillance and geolocation: Providing the location of workers and assets for security and safety purposes.

tracking moving assets: Working with self-driving vehicle technology and software guidance systems to provide situational awareness of mobile assets.

automation: Enabling independently operating robots to perform operational tasks.

Local Policy

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that “If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

City of Durham Local Plan Saved Policies (September 2007)

The City of Durham Local Plan sets out the development strategy and the land use policies and allocations required to deliver this strategy.

The Local Plan is a key component of the Development Plan for the former district and is therefore a material consideration during the determination of planning application.

The aims of the Local Plan are fundamental statements of what it sets out to accomplish and are set out below:

- To maintain the City of Durham as an attractive place to live, work and visit and to support the creation of a vibrant City and District whose unique character is conserved and enhanced in ways which do not compromise the quality of the environment or the quality of life of future generations.


- To promote and provide opportunities for development in the interests of a growing City and District, inward investment and encouraging sustainable economic growth for the benefit of residents and future generations.

Policy U1 relates to the utilities and telecommunication infrastructure provision.

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Policy U1 Telecommunications

When considering applications for telecommunications equipment, the council planning permission where the benefits arising from the development would outweigh environmental damage. The following factors will be taken into consideration:

1. The specific operational needs and locational requirements of the proposal;
2. The significance of the proposal as part of a national network;
3. The operational suitability and environmental effects of alternative sites;
4. The possibility of shared use of existing sites and structures;
5. Associated developments including access roads and ancillary buildings;
6. The relationship between the design of the equipment and its surroundings;
7. The adequacy of screening to the ground station;
8. The effects on the openness of the Green Belt;
9. The adequacy of arrangements to ensure the removal of redundant equipment and the restoration of the site.

Proposals within statutory designated areas will only be permitted where no alternative suitable sites available and there is a proven national need for the development.

The County Durham Plan (Adopted October 2020)

The County Durham Plan was adopted on 21 October 2020. The plan sets out the future development of a place to improve the lives of its existing and future residents. It states: “the county has seen some successful regeneration in the past but our overall economy is the weakest in the North East, itself the poorest performing economy in England. We therefore need an ambitious local plan that promotes quality of life, provides jobs for a flexible skilled workforce, protects and enhances our special environment and supports our towns and villages.”

The Spatial Vision for County Durham states:


“By 2035 County Durham will have a thriving economy, reducing levels of deprivation, social exclusion and joblessness with the associated health and quality of life improvements. It will also be bridging the gap between its economic performance and that of other parts of the North East and the rest of England. It will be a top location for business capitalising on its strategic location on the A1(M), A19, A66, East Coast Mainline, its east coast links and its close proximity to Durham Tees Valley and Newcastle International Airports.

The county will comprise of sustainable, balanced and regenerated communities, with development being located to achieve sustainable patterns of development, effective use of land and reduce our contribution to climate change and support the vitality and vibrancy of existing centres. All communities and businesses will be accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system, resulting in increased

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transport use and safe, well used and attractive cycling and walking routes. The co have an accessible, well designed range and choice of good quality housin affordable housing, services and community, leisure and recreational facilities, complementing and contributing to the area's thriving economy and meeting the all existing and future residents. At the heart of communities will be acc infrastructure, not only improving the quality of place but people's quality of life and reducing health inequalities. The county's rural areas will be continuing to play a vit county's economy, employment and tourism, including through diversification and embracing the opportunities provided by improved broadband connectivity".

Of particular relevance is Objective 4, relating to Infrastructure, which states the Co "enable the delivery of the necessary infrastructure such as transport, health and edu digital and green infrastructure, that is required to support new and existing developme and the economic, social and environmental ambitions of the county."

Policy 27 relates to 'Utilities, Telecommunications and Other Broadcast Infrastruct states:

"Proposals will be permitted for new or extensions to existing energy gene transmission facilities, telecommunication masts or other broadcast ar equipment which facilitate the electronic transfer of data where:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the scheme will not cause significant adverse impacts its benefits outweigh any adverse negative effects;
- b. it is located at an existing mast or transmission site, where it is technically and operati feasible and does not result in visual clutter.

Where a new site is required, applicants must demonstrate to the council's satisfac the use of existing sites in the area have been fully explored and are not feasible. Equi must be sympathetically designed and camouflaged and not result in visual clutter; and c where applicable, it does not cause significant or irreparable interfere electrical equipment, air traffic services or other instrumentation operated in th interest".

Paragraph 5.267 withing Policy 27 states "Modern telecommunications and acces speed, reliable broadband are now considered essential to growing a sustainable ec future, providing opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint by reducing the need to travel vital for education and individual lifestyles, as well as an increasingly community cohesion and resilience. It is particularly important in rural areas w benefit businesses, tourism and enable communities to access services and facilities online but where commercial providers are less willing to provide access".


North East Enterprise Partnership | Digital for Growth

Digital for Growth is the North East's Digital Strategy. It has been developed by the North Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), together with its partners. The LEP recognises that digit

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critical to the development of our economy in the broadest sense. Digital acknowledges the ubiquity of 'digital' and the challenges of defining it as a single s

The North East's Digital for Growth strategy has been created with the aim together partners across the North East to maximise opportunities for growth and invest in the region.

Digital for Growth identifies priority areas where the North East LEP will work with partners to build on the region's assets. These areas are data; infrastructure and connectivity; collaboration and enterprise; and workforce.

The strategy is led by the North East LEP and will be delivered in partnership with businesses and organisations across the North East, and overseen by a Digital for Growth steering group.

The Vision is to:

'To present a collaborative, cohesive and ambitious North East digital ecosystem leading the digitalisation of industry. We want the impact of this to improve the quality of life for the people who live, work, study and visit the North East and for the businesses who invest and trade here'.

The North East Strategic Economic Plan (January 2019)

The Strategic Economic Plan identifies four areas in the economy where we mean we have a strong opportunity for growth. We want to build on these areas, with

- Digital
- Advanced manufacturing
- Health and life sciences
- Energy.

Our plan is strongly focused on addressing our key challenges that include fewer employment opportunities compared to other parts of the UK and improving the quality of jobs.

We also have underlying issues including lower productivity performance and higher levels of economic inactivity and exclusion, although we have seen improvement in both areas.


Emerging challenges for our region include Brexit, volatility in the global environment and trade. We also face wider UK challenges including the productivity and rising costs and inflation.

Significant changes in the global economy present opportunities for the North East to build on our assets, skills and industries. These include:

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- Our capacity to demonstrate how digitalisation can transform the economy and society through increased digital adoption and connectivity, new service models and business models in sectors such as manufacturing and maximising the potential of our research and business assets.

- Improving health and responding to an ageing population through innovation in treatment and public health practice is another of our strengths. The North East makes a significant contribution to this area through strong clinical research and our excellent health care system.

- We also have the capability to play a leading role shaping the future of manufacturing. Our strengths in automotive, pharmaceuticals and energy have earned us a reputation for quality and productivity. Innovation opportunities in areas like batteries, fuel cells and energy technologies, process innovation and digital services are key to the future.

- The UK has committed to tackling climate change and promoting clean growth. We can continue to this agenda by our reduction of carbon emissions through renewable energy generation, sub-sea technologies and investment in zero carbon transport.

Opportunities and ambitions for the region:

- We want to accelerate digital transformation across the regional economy, enhance productivity and the quality of public and private services and creating new opportunities for our businesses across all sectors.

- There are digital opportunities specifically within the transport and logistics industry including ports, airports, maritime and rail, which will transform their use of digital technology through innovation applications including Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Big Data, Space and Satellite.

- By building on our track record of innovative partnerships we must make the most of the opportunities available to us to further develop our digital infrastructure, mobile broadband, ultrafast, next generation connectivity and 5G.

The SEP within the Investment and Infrastructure chapter recognises many economic and social benefits that will be achieved by improving digital infrastructure, therefore, the Government will need to:

- Invest in enabling infrastructure and premises that support the development of agglomeration economies in specific sectors and localities.


- Identify strategic economic priority investments required for economic growth and develop those key projects ready for delivery.

- Develop best in class digital infrastructure to underpin the efficient functioning and growth of the regional economy, and identify opportunities to improve and accelerate

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roll out of fibre, 4G and 5G technologies to accelerate business opportunities and gain regional competitive advantage.

- Improve digital infrastructure, to provide a competitive position for the region.

Online Nation 2022 Report

Online Nation is an annual research report, published for the first time in 2019. Using research produced by Ofcom and others, it looks at what people in the UK are doing online, how they are served by online content providers and platforms, and their attitudes to and experiences of using the internet.

The latest Online Nation 2022 report (published June 2022) found that for most people in the UK, being online is a major part of daily life. Being online allows people to connect with others, sometimes in ways they may not be able to do offline. Data shows how we benefit from a range of online services, from messaging and calling platforms to gaming platforms, news outlets and online shopping.

The Meta-Owned social media apps (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and Messenger) made up the top four smartphone apps most visited daily by UK smartphone users in September 2021. The top-reaching smartphone app was Whatsapp (88% of UK online smartphone users) closely followed by the Facebook app (87%).

94% of UK adult internet users aged 16+ said they used an online communications service for making voice/video calls or sending messages in 2021, and 80% of children aged 3-15 did the same.

The 2022 report found that the UK adult internet users spent almost 4 hours online in September 2021, with 3 of those hours being spent on smartphones. One in five people use a smartphone to go online compared to one in ten last year. News and government public services are among the most-visited websites and apps in the UK.

The majority (67%) of UK internet users aged 13+ feel that the benefits of being online outweigh the risks. 43% agree that being online has an overall positive impact on their mental health.


The report found that 60% of children aged 8-15 say that using social media and messaging platforms makes them feel closer to their friends. More than three-quarters of children aged 12-15 said that being online can help with their school/homework, whilst half said it can be used to learn a new skill.

The Online Nation 2022 report acknowledged that the global pandemic since March 2020 has resulted in significant changes in online behaviour. Online shopping habits developed during the lockdown periods have remained. The largest online platforms' revenues and profits increased significantly during the lockdown periods and this growth continued in 2021. The growth is being driven by UK consumers increasing spend on e-commerce and

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entertainment subscription services, while advertising revenues are also increasing & continuing brand migration to online.

Figure 1.2 of the Online Nation 2022 report indicates that the percentage of UK online accessing the internet, by device, in 2021 was the highest by smartphone. In September 2021 73% of the time spent online by UK adults per day was on a smartphone.

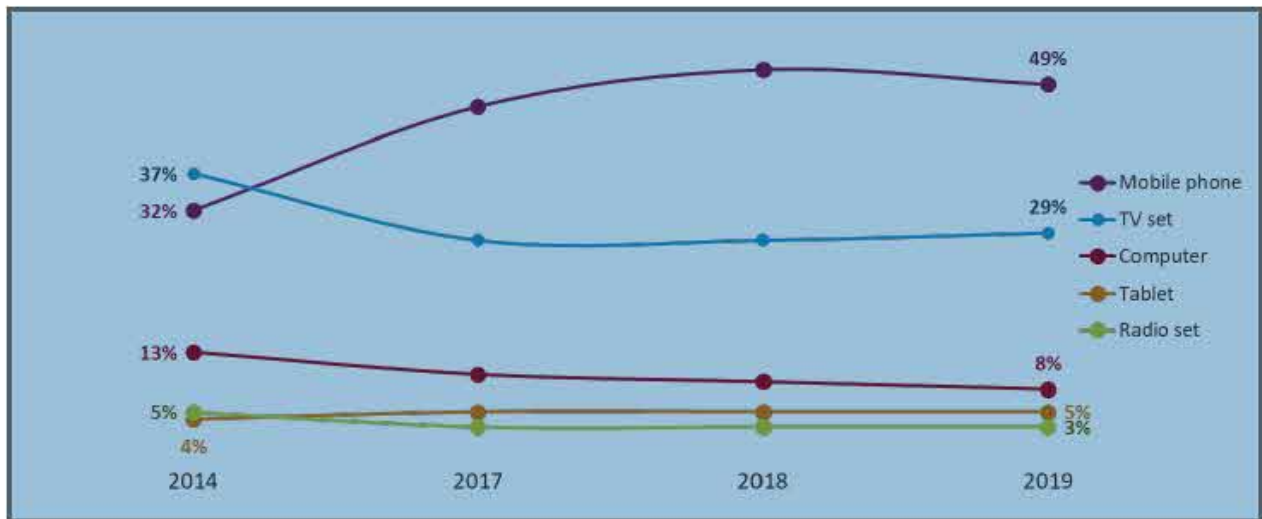
Figure 1.2: Percentage of UK online adults accessing the internet, by device: 2021

Percentage of adult internet users	Smartphone	Tablet	Laptop	Smartphone only
2021	88%	43%	53%	21%

Source: Ofcom Adults' Media Literacy Tracker 2021: Core survey and CATI omnibus survey. IN1. Which of these devices do you use to go online? (MULTI CODE) Base: All adults 16+ that go online (at home or elsewhere) (excluding those who did not give a response at the postal survey) (3577)

Reproduced from Online Nation 2022 Report

The table below indicates the most-missed device among adults were it be taken away from them, using data collected 2014-2019. As can be seen, nearly half of all adults say that their mobile device is the device they would miss the most were it taken away from them.




The Report found that social media and messaging sites reach 98% of the UK adult population. On average, visitors aged 18+ spent 49 minutes per person per day on social media sites, considerably more time on average than in key areas such as news sites (12 minutes per user), e-commerce sites (14 minutes) and even gaming sites (31 minutes).

Ninety-two per cent of time spent on social media sites took place on a mobile device (smartphones and tablets) rather than on a computer, compared to 81% of total time spent online.

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The Connected Nations December 2020² report is published as the UK continues to address the challenges of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic; a time when people, families and businesses have come to rely on their phone and broadband connections as never before. We report on how the networks have performed during this period and how the availability of services has evolved.

The report sets out in its findings:

The UK's fixed and mobile networks have generally coped during the pandemic. A shift to more people being at home drove increased demand on broadband networks during the day, although peak usage remained in the evening. Mobile networks also experienced increases in voice traffic.

The number of mobile base stations providing 5G services has risen 10-fold, to around 3,000 across the UK. 87% of these are in England, 7% in Scotland and 3% in both Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mobile coverage is generally stable. The four mobile network operators (Ofcom – EE, O2, Three and Vodafone - each estimate they provide outdoor coverage to 98%-99% of premises. Their networks' coverage of the UK landmass ranges from around 79% to around 85%. The Shared Rural Network programme agreed in March 2020 will extend coverage beyond 2025.

A small, but significant number of properties are still struggling to get connected. We estimate that 43,000 premises cannot access either a decent fixed broadband service, or mobile coverage, indoors.

Mobile data consumption continues to rise, increasing by 42% compared with last year. 83% of the total data traffic was consumed in England with about 10% in Scotland, 4% in Wales and 3% in Northern Ireland (largely in line with UK population distribution). Reflecting growth, the traffic carried in England in June exceeded that carried across the whole UK in February.

The report acknowledges that being connected has never been more important in the UK. *“People have been relying on phone and broadband services more and more over the years, and the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020 has brought this reliance into even sharper focus. In March 2020, life changed suddenly for millions of people across the UK. Fast, reliable broadband and mobile connections were essential to allow them to work from home, complete up with schoolwork, access medical appointments and public services, stay in touch with friends and family, order shopping online, and keep themselves entertained”.*


The report acknowledges that “during the first COVID-19 lockdown, networks performed successfully with the changes in data and voice traffic volumes and distribution. As people began working from home and schools were shut during the COVID-19 spring

² https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/209373/connected-nations-2020.pdf

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lockdown. New peaks were reached for most of the network metrics reported by MNOs before or during the week lockdown measures were first introduced across the UK in 2020. Although these peaks generally reduced with the gradual easing of lockdown, they have remained higher than they were before (in line with the historical trend for increasing growth in data consumption)”.

The report further notes that the “MNOs all experienced some form of congestion on their networks in this period, but successfully mitigated this, in part by increasing inter-operator capabilities between themselves. Some operators applied further temporary upgrades to their voice and data capabilities in order to cope with increased demands during this period, for example deploying temporary base stations in and around hospitals (particularly Nightingale hospitals) to provide additional capacity”.

“Compared to periods before the spring lockdown, mobile voice traffic increased by 45% across the operators. One operator observed an increase in average call duration from about 2.5 minutes (pre-lockdown) to 4 minutes in the week lockdown measures were introduced. These call lengths and volumes spiked in March, before gradually declining. Within this general trend for growth, we can also observe drops in average call duration and data traffic around 8pm for the 10-week period from 26 March 2020, coinciding with the nation coming together to applaud the efforts of the NHS during the Covid-19 crisis. Increased amounts of voice traffic were also offloaded to Wi-Fi, although with significant variations between operators”.

Levelling Up the United Kingdom (February 2022)

Digital Connectivity is a focus area and the mission is ‘By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population’.

Chapter 3 - The Policy Programme:

Para 3.2.4 - By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population

This mission is focused on improving digital connectivity.


Digital connectivity: The case for action

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of digital infrastructure right across society, from ensuring business continuity to reducing isolation. Improved digital connectivity has the potential to drive growth and productivity across the UK and widen job opportunities through remote working. However, there are significant spatial disparities in the availability of broadband and mobile networks, with rural areas likely to experience lower connectivity than urban areas. Infrastructure is only part of the picture: economic benefits will only materialise if businesses and workers have the skills to take advantage of digital infrastructure.

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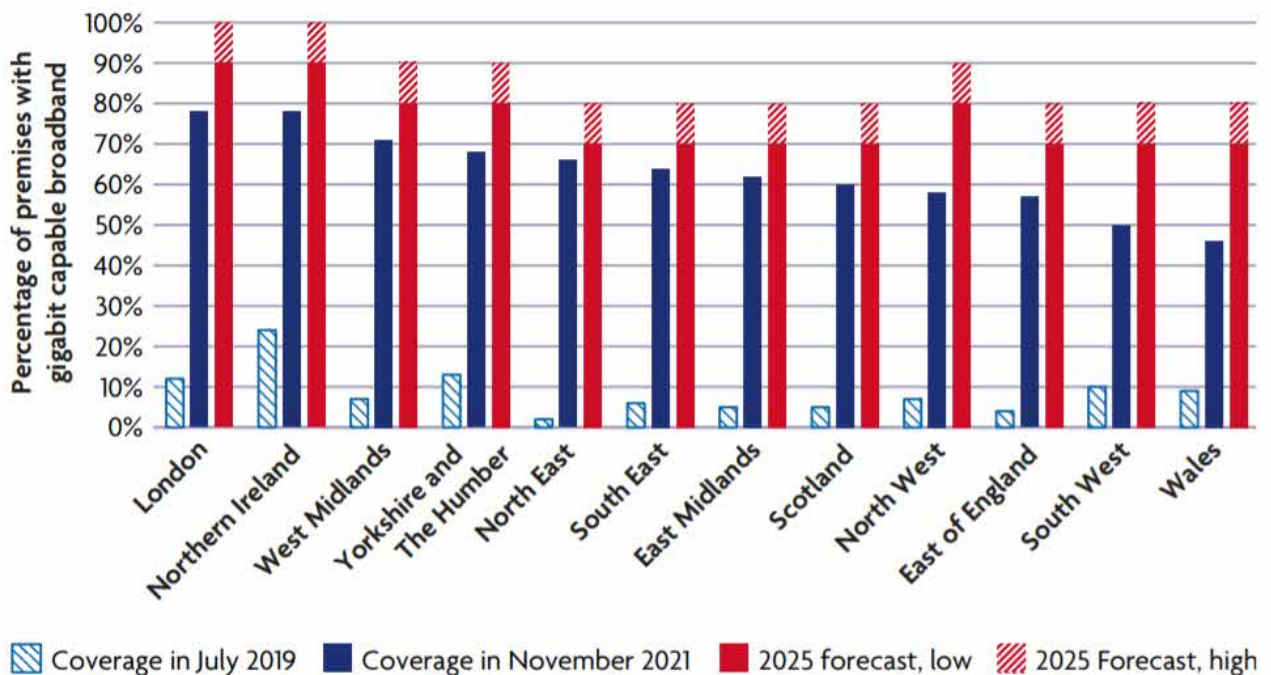
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More broadly, high quality digital infrastructure can deepen local labour market remote working, making it more attractive for both workers and companies regionally. It also allows for the development of high-value sectoral clusters, which can drive growth and jobs in new areas. Existing specialisms in the UK regions have the potential to generate strong tech clusters, such as fintech in Scotland and Wales, e-Commerce in the North West and Northern Ireland, and Agri-Tech in Yorkshire and the Humber. The sector also provides opportunities for raising living standards – median earnings for the sector are 5% higher than the UK average.

The policy programme In 2020, the UK Government published the National Infrastructure Strategy, committing to providing £5bn in public funding to roll out gigabit broadband to at least 85% of the country by 2025, and subsequently to as close to 100% as possible, working with the private sector.

Public investment will target premises that are hardest to reach and which would not be provided for by the private sector, ensuring no areas are left behind. Gigabit coverage has increased from 10% to over 60% in less than two years. Since 2019, coverage has improved across the UK, and the UK Government anticipates the following additional improvements to be delivered as a minimum by 2025, as set out below.

Figure 3.1 Gigabit coverage improvements, UK countries and regions, 2019, 2021 and 2025 (forecast)




Source: Levelling Up the United Kingdom.

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5G has the potential to radically change the way people live and make business productive and competitive. The UK Government's ambition is for the entire population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. Since 2017, the UK Government has provided £200m in funding for 5G Testbeds and Trials, supporting over 200 startups and SMEs across a range of sectors – including healthcare, manufacturing, Agri-Tech and creative industries – to better understand how to use the technology to develop new solutions and services.

In 2022, the UK Government will publish the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy. This will review how far the private sector will go to deliver wireless infrastructure – including 5G – across the country, and determine whether there are any market failures in places that need to be addressed, and how the UK Government could tackle these.

Box 3.9 - West Midlands 5G The West Midlands 5G (WM5G) Testbed started in 2018 with a mission of testing and proving the benefits of 5G to public and private sector by creating jobs and boosting growth. The UK Government has invested £21m over three years, alongside investment from local government and the private sector. By working with local authorities and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), WM5G has accelerated 5G deployment by over six months, resulting in the West Midlands being amongst the best-connected places for 5G in the UK. In addition, WM5G has delivered a number of UK firsts, including a 5G sensor network, 5G connected ambulance and capsule endoscopy trial application accelerator programme called 5prinG, which has already upskilled over 400 organisations on the benefits of 5G and allowed over 60 start-ups to develop new products and services.

We must ensure that people have sufficient digital skills to reap the benefits and opportunities arising from the digital economy. In 2020, the UK Government introduced a new digital entitlement, giving adults with low or no digital skills in England free access to new digital skill qualifications based on employer-supported national standards. The UK Government continues to work with local leaders to develop Local Digital Skills Partnerships. Collaborative partnerships are now operating in seven regions across England, with an eighth formally launching in Hull and East Yorkshire in early March. The UK Government will work with local devolved administrations to consider how best to share the insights and evaluate the programme to help build digital skills capability across the UK.


Planning Assessment

The main issues arising from this prior approval notification are the scale and siting of antennas, which would be a visually obtrusive feature which could be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. Whether any perceived benefits would outweigh the significant social and economic benefits associated with the introduction of 5G service provision attributed to the proposal and other valid material considerations outlined within NPPF, which fully supports the roll out of 5G and the next generation of connectivity to accelerate business opportunities and growth to ensure the economy is resilient and competitive, and also the relevant objectives and policies within

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Durham Local Plan (Saved Policies), the County Durham Plan, the North East E Partnership – Digital for Growth, and the North East SEP.

The principle of siting telecommunications equipment at land at Heugh H accepted many years ago by the council. The installation has been in situ for r and is an established feature of the landscape. The proposed upgrade fully complies \ the NPPF, Durham Local Plan (Saved Policies), the County Durham Plan, the Nc Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, and the North East SEP as it will improve capaci and provide new 5G services to this area of Durham.

Access to a high quality, reliable superfast mobile network is not just ‘a nice to have essential part of everyday life. Indeed many, including the former Minis Infrastructure Matt Warman, consider it to be the fourth utility service as important as ga water and electricity, a lifeline for many especially during the COVID-19 pandemic wher people were able to see their loved ones, speak to friends and family and arra meetings allowing some form of normality in a very abnormal situation.

The principle of development has been established by the Government w permitted development rights came in to force in April 2022, which enabled sites such one to be built under the operators permitted development rights, with prior approval for siting and appearance being the only matters that the local planning authority can to consideration.

Planning Practice Guidance explains how a prior approval application differs from a plc application at paragraph 28. It states that:

‘ The statutory requirements relating to prior approval are n those relating to planning applications. This is deliberate, as prior approval is light-touch process which applies where the principle of the development has al been established (emphasis added). Where no specific procedure is provided in General Permitted Development Order, local planning authorities have discr what processes they put in place. It is important that a local planning authc not impose unnecessarily onerous requirements on developers and does not seek to replicate the planning application system’ (emphasis added).

The Planning Portal also provides Application Type Guidance. This guidance states the


‘ Certain forms of telecommunication development, for example, mobile t masts, are known as ‘permitted development’ and subject to prior approval i local planning authority. The prior approval procedure means that the p development is not an issue. The LPA can only consider the siting and appearanc the proposal’.

Sting

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The proposal is for the replacement of the existing telecom Land at Heugh Hall Farm. The principle of telecommunications development location has already been accepted by the LPA. The replacement of an existing site is wholly in line with national planning policy guidance on taking a sequential approach seeking to upgrade existing sites first. This also aligns with Policy 27 of the County Durham Plan and Policy U1 of the City of Durham Saved Policies. The existing site is located on private land to the east of the A1, shielded from the motorway by a corridor of large trees. They provide a backdrop for the proposed mast and screening from the residential area of Bowburn on the opposite (west) side of the A1 motorway which continues north and south.

Government guidance states that in order to limit visual intrusion, the number of radio telecommunication masts and the sites should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing sufficient capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for electronic communications capability should be encouraged. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate. The proposal fully complies with this Government guidance. The existing site will be upgraded with a replacement monopole, allowing VMO2 and Vodafone to provide enhanced capacity and new 5G services to the area. This is in line with the guidance in the NPPF and Code of Practice, as well as the aims to improve connectivity as outlined in the City of Durham Local Plan (Saved Policies), the County Durham Plan, the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, and the North East SEP.

The proposed upgrade to the existing radio base station will enhance VMO2 and Vodafone customer experience by providing improved 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity, as well as new 5G services to the surrounding area of Coxhoe and users of the motorway. It will enable the operator's customers to continue to utilise their handheld devices for the purposes in which they have become accustomed, as well as being able to access new mobile technology wherever they are whether that be indoors or outside. The design promotes mast sharing and minimises the need for a new installation in the area. It offers the best environmental solution, limiting the number of new sites required, limiting the visual intrusion in the area. This is in full accordance with NPPF and the Code of Practice, as well as policy 27 of the County Durham Plan.


The top height of the antennas will be at 20m above ground level. The antennas will resemble as closely as possible the existing antennas already in situ and they will be located in the same position as the existing antennas at the top of the mast. The new antennas will be made from the same type of materials, same colour and a similar size to the existing antennas although they will need to be slightly bigger and wider in order to support all the latest technologies on the one installation. This minimises visual amenity in line with the NPPF.

The ERSs are small for telecommunications apparatus. They are designed to make the antennas more efficient. In order to maximise signal efficiency the ERSs need to be as close as possible to the antennas, hence they need to be located near the antennas on the monopole headframe. Given their height above ground level and their size, which is approximately that of a shoe box, they will not appear prominent.

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Appearance

In accordance with the guidance contained within the NPPF, policy U1 of the City of D Saved Policies and Policy 27 of County Durham Plan, the visual impact on the area has been minimised. The radio base station is proposed to be a monopole with open headframe which is required to provide the latest technologies. Given the makeup of the area that has large, mature trees adjacent to the proposal, the monopole will not appear out of place within the area which will be well shielded from certain vantage points on private land.

The open headframe is a technical requirement for the operators without which they would not be able to fit all their multi technology within the same structure and any additional structure would be required within the cell area which would contribute to the proliferation of masts contrary to national guidance. The proposed headframe is slightly wider than that of the existing, which is necessary to allow for the upgraded equipment and proposed RRUs to be installed at the required orientations.

It is essential that the 5G antennas are unshrouded. As the radio frequencies required for data carrying, the antennas are less able to propagate through blockages including Glass Reinforced Plastic, which is what the shroud is made from. This affects the 5G antennas more so than any other technology. The result being they do not operate effectively close to Glass Reinforced Plastic or any other blockage. Therefore there is a technical reason why the 5G antennas need to be unshrouded. The latest 4G technology are also affected more so than older technologies by propagation therefore less efficient if they are shrouded. Given that the existing antennas are unshrouded it is not considered that this will have an unacceptable visual impact on the area which is in accordance with the NPPF.


The replacement monopole is considered to be more appropriate than a larger, lattice structure. This is because the larger headframe and increase in mast height required, would present a far more prominent feature within the surrounding area if a lattice structure was used. Instead, the proposed monopole ensures that the least amount of equipment as possible is proposed to reduce its visual impact. The proposed equipment will also be coloured grey to match the existing and thus limit visual change to the surrounding area. The visual appearance of the proposal described above complies with the NPPF, County Durham Saved Policies, County Durham Plan, North East Enterprise Partnership and North East Enterprise Partnership (NEEP).

As previously explained in this supporting statement, the latest 4G and 5G technologies operate in higher frequency bands than older technologies. At these frequencies, attenuation of the radio signal is naturally higher and the effects of clutter are greater. It therefore follows that these antennas require a larger structure to achieve the same coverage footprint. As a result, to increase capacity and data speeds to the user, the antenna will normally need to be mounted higher than conventional antennas. If the masts were to be any lower, the antennas would not be able to provide the necessary 5G coverage to the target coverage area as they would not be able to clear the surrounding large trees and vast landscape to reach devices. As a result, the antenna signal would not be able

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operate effectively. A lower height would lead to a poor user experience for a large part of the target coverage area. As such, this would fail the operators design and any additional installation would have to be found leading to the proliferation of masts in contravention of national planning guidance contained in the NPPF.

This is a prior approval application where the principle of this type of development is established by the Government under the Town and Country Planning (GPDO) Order 2015 (as amended) which states that this type of development is permitted subject to the approval of the siting and appearance of the installation. This is therefore akin to an outline planning permission. Given the nature of the area and the fact that the proposal will eventually replace an existing site, it is considered that the proposal would not appear prominent nor out of place.

The design of the radio base station is one of the most sensitive designs available to an operator which will upgrade an existing site, which has been in situ for many years, to the most visually sensitive replacement possible. This is in line with the requirements of the NPI which supports equipment which is sympathetically designed and camouflaged to be appropriate [paragraph 113], The Code of Practice as well as the aspirations of Policies 26 and 27 of the City of Durham Saved Policies and Policy 27 of the County Durham Plan.

Lack of Coverage – Material Consideration


In accordance with the NPPF, the proposed upgrade to the existing installation is significant to enable continuous coverage of the telecommunication network, ensuring that the City of Durham continues to get the mobile coverage it needs for VMO2 customers as well as 5G coverage. It will also maintain and improve coverage for the Mobile Virtual Network Operator's (MVNOs) which use the VMO2 and Vodafone networks which includes GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile, Sky Mobile, Talk Talk Mobile, and Lyca Mobile on the VMO2 network and VOXI, Lebara Mobile and Talkmobile on the Vodafone network. So, the proposal will not only provide a service for two operators but those who buy network space off them, will have at least 5 with VMO2 and 3 with Vodafone. This will provide a choice for those customers who consider the level of coverage in their area when selecting which operator, they agree contracts with.

The current proposals will facilitate the development of an advanced telecommunications infrastructure in line with National Government guidance within the NPPF which supports infrastructure especially where growth takes place. It will also fully comply with the County Durham Plan, which seeks to improve digital infrastructure and service delivery to businesses and residents. By providing the latest 4G technology and service provision the proposals will also help meet the aspiration of Digital for Growth, to be a world-leading digital county. Embracing digital technology throughout all sectors, geographies and occupations is fundamental to the North East's current and future international competitiveness according to the Digital for Growth Strategy. Becoming a leading digital city region is imperative to delivering the North East's Digital for Growth Strategy of delivering the economic, social and inclusion improvements it needs and

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It will help the North East become the smartest city, an aspiration of the North East SEP. Digital growth plays a fundamental role in driving economic growth.

Mobiles can only work with a network of base stations in place where people use their mobile phones or other wireless devices. Without base stations, the mobile phone and other devices we rely on simply won't work. The proposed new mast has been sited and designed in order to provide new 3G, 4G and the latest 5G coverage and to improve the existing mobile network where there is currently a hole in coverage.

The way 5G works, it is closely connected with the Smart City agenda and the need for a centralized control of lots of different street infrastructure owned or managed by such as street lights, water meters and bus stops. By providing the latest 4G technology and a new 5G service provision the proposals will also support the North East Enterprise Partnership and objective 4 of the County Durham Plan both of which encourage the extension of connectivity to all parts of the Local Enterprise Partnership areas and County Durham. Enhancing connectivity infrastructure is a key part of the Growth Strategy as set out in the North East Enterprise Partnership and the North East SEP as it will aid with economic and business growth.

Trials have already begun across the UK to demonstrate the potential of 5G and how it can improve and drive productivity and efficiency. In June 2019, West Midlands 5G partnered with BT and University Hospitals Birmingham to trial the UK's first 5G Connected Ambulance. Real-Time communications between the paramedics and the hospital doctors enabled an effective diagnosis of the patient at an early stage of care. The trial showed that a paramedic performed a remote-controlled ultra-sound scan on a patient in an ambulance over a public 5G network. These trials show how digital connectivity and technology can reduce patient waiting times and save lives (Source: WM5G).


In line with the NPPF and the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, the North East SEP, the City of Durham Local Plan, and the County Durham Plan, the proposals will provide world-class connections and access to opportunity for all in this cell area, as well as providing world-class digital infrastructure which provides the platform for the Coxhoe area to embrace emerging technologies and societal changes. 5G infrastructure is fundamental to enable digital technologies to function. The proposals will ensure that any Three customers in this cell area will be able to access resilient, seamless connectivity at a speed that is available anywhere at any time. Without the more basic technology solutions such as 5G, smart-region solutions and value-added outcomes will struggle to be brought to fruition.

Without this new site, the operator's customers would continue to experience an increasing number of dropped calls and buffering unable to access the internet on their mobile devices. They would also not be able to access the 5G network, a demand that is increasing rapidly as customers update their handheld devices to ones that are not 5G compatible. If the 5G network is not available then the customers' devices would not be able to function for the purposes in which they were purchased. This would be contrary to the aspirations of Central Government which aspires to everyone having access to high-speed digital connectivity.

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to the superfast highway network wherever they are, and that the majority of the population have access to a 5G service by 2027.

In accordance with the NPPF the proposed installation will help improve the area's economic prosperity, strengthen the urban economy's by supporting local businesses to adapt and diversify. It will support a better environment for today and tomorrow by reducing the need to travel and in turn minimise carbon emissions. This is in accordance with the East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, the North East SEP, the Policy U1 of the City of Durham Local Plan, and the County Durham Plan. The radio base station will support delivery of healthcare provision and accessibility by enabling people greater access to services, NHS appointment reminders, reminders to take medicines, make appointments. As well as assisting hospital outpatient appointments and emergency consultations out remotely via video link, connected ambulances, live streaming of CCTV footage etc. This is also highlighted within the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth and the North East SEP which expands on the significant economic gains which are possible. The region can deploy the best infrastructure for digital connectivity.

By enhancing the 3G and 4G service provision to the surrounding area and providing 5G coverage into the operator's network, this would fully support the NPPF and the ambition of the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth and the North East SEP which has the ambition for the region to be recognised as one of the best connected regions in the country. The North East SEP recognises that digitalisation and improved infrastructure can transform the economy and society through increased digital adoption and connectivity, new service and business models in sectors such as manufacturing, maximising the potential of our research and business assets.

The Councilor's Guide to Digital Connectivity notes that a survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry found that 81% of firms said that they see more reliable mobile connectivity as essential. Studies have also shown that mobile broadband is associated with positive impacts nationally, such as higher GDP and increased employment.

Therefore, the Government fully supports high quality communications infrastructure, more so with the advent of 5G. The NPPF continues to strongly support telecommunications connectivity and states at paragraph 114 that local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks. It acknowledges that advanced, quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic and social well-being.


The demand for mobile data in the UK is increasing rapidly, and as households and businesses become increasingly reliant on mobile connectivity, the infrastructure must be in place to ensure supply does not become a constraint on future demand.

The proposed installation in this location will fill the current gap in the latest high quality service provision and enable the operator and MVNOs who buy network space off this operator to maintain access to their handheld devices wherever they are for the purposes in which the

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were purchased. This is fully in line with the Government's aspirations that everyone has access to the superfast communications network, contained within the NPPF.

Access to the internet in whatever medium now impacts every facet of our lives. The benefits of internet connectivity are for both residents and businesses alike and a radio base station in this location providing the latest 3G, 4G and 5G technologies will support the NPPF.

In line with guidance contained within the NPPF a radio base station in this location will ensure fast, reliable, secure internet accessibility wherever the user is located. This would fully support the latest operators' coverage and capacity requirements for 3G, 4G and new 5G provision. This would be wholly in line with the Government's latest aspirations to support a strong, advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure, essential for economic growth and social well-being. Where the NPPF notes that decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks. An installation outside this search area, regardless of whether there are existing sites, would not allow the operator to provide the desired level of coverage and therefore would not adequately maintain and provide coverage and capacity.

As part of the operators 4G licence obligations, many customers will benefit significantly from a vastly improved service provision in this locality. They will be able to gain access to the latest technologies and connectivity, including 5G, to high-speed data services. Digital technology has catalysed the interconnection of the global economy, with enabling the free exchange of goods and services, providing consumers with greater choice and businesses with access to skills, resources and new customers. The Code of Practice acknowledges that upgrading and improving mobile networks will not be possible without the necessary infrastructure on which we rely. With increasing consumer demand and the Government's aspirations for high quality communications infrastructure it is ever more important to improve connectivity and capacity.


In the Code of Practice, it emphasises the need for Local Planning Authorities to take account of network deployment and siting and design, when considering proposals. In relation to the introduction of 5G network deployment the Code acknowledges the requirement for additional equipment to provide necessary coverage and capacity. With the increasing consumer demand and the Government's ambitious aspirations it is becoming increasingly important to improve connectivity and capacity. This is due to the ever-increasing demand for data hungry applications to be available to a range of connected devices including smartphones and tablet computers. However, the Code notes that upgrading and improving mobile networks will not be possible without the necessary infrastructure on which they rely. Therefore, there is a significant need to locate the equipment in this area.

The operator not only has a license requirement to provide a certain level of 3G/4G coverage to the population the operators are obliged to meet the growing consumer demand for 5G coverage, but especially as more people are also purchasing 5G enabled devices, in line with their license obligations and the operators competitive market driven "requirement to provide a high-quality service. Customers expect to be able to access their portable devices -

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held devices wherever they are, whether that be indoors or outside. The current coverage in this area is struggling to cope with demand and therefore the new site is required to increase capacity on the network in this busy urban area.

The Online Nation 2021 Report highlights the importance of smart phones and the connectivity. In September 2020, UK Internet users spent nearly 4 times as much on smartphones than they did on computers. The report found that most of the time people spend on the internet is via apps on mobile devices. Social media serves as a source of entertainment and education for many, and as an important method of doing businesses. The report found that 91% of households used smartphones to access the internet in 2021, compared to 65% who used tablets and 47% who accessed the internet on computers. The Report notes that the smartphone is the most-used device for accessing the internet for all age groups apart from those aged 65 +.

It is therefore imperative that the operator continues to invest in ensuring that the latest technologies are available on its network, so that customers are able to continue to use their handheld devices wherever they are, for whatever reason, for the purposes in which the devices were purchased.

Economic and Social Benefits


The NPPF strongly supports sustainable development, as do the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, the North East SEP, the Policy U1 of the City of Durham Local Plan, and the County Durham Plan. Mobile communication plays a significant role in sustainable development. Being able to access the internet via a mobile device allows people to access a wide range of central and local government services but also to manage finances, apply for jobs/university, and carry out school projects, send emails, download applications, send and receive instant messages, participate in social media, streaming and downloading data to name just a few of the benefits of being able to use an internet enabled handheld device. It also allows people to work from home or on the move without needing to return to the office. Residents and businesses will enjoy better access to services assisting home-base working by improving the electronic means of communication and the roll-out of high-speed broadband helping to promote live-work development. This reduces travel time, carbon emissions and increases the speed in which information is processed/shared. The proposals therefore fully comply with NPPF and the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, the North East SEP, the Policy U1 of the City of Durham Local Plan, and the County Durham Plan aims, to minimise the effects of climate change reducing the need to travel and therefore the carbon footprint.

In such instances, as described above, the NPPF supports development that improves economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Enhancing the 2G, 3G coverage and capacity in this area and providing new 5G services will fully meet this national and local policy objective. Continuing to transform the digital connectivity of the area to drive economic growth and innovation, working to meet national targets of full roll-out of 5G technology and that all populated areas are connected to the 5G network by 2030, will ensure economic growth and social well-being.

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Mobile connectivity is essential to the future success of the economy. The combine of 4G and 5G mobile connectivity is estimated to add £18.5bn to the economy (Councils and Connectivity Sept 2018). Mobile connectivity is essential to creating a better society. Digital inclusion can help people gain employment, become more financially independent and improve health and well-being. Mobile connectivity is essential to fulfilling the potential of new technologies. Innovations such as artificial intelligence and connected cars will change how we work, spend our leisure time and run our public services. In accordance with the aims of North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, the North East SEP, the Policy U1 of the City of Durham Local Plan, and the County Durham Plan, all of which aspire to improve connectivity and access to enhanced 4G/new 5G services in the city region.

Providing the latest digital infrastructure to enable improvements in digital connectivity empowers and enables residents to have the highest quality of life, supports the creation of high-quality jobs and achieves the maximum productivity levels. It will help this area to comply with the aims and objectives of the relevant County Durham and North East region strategies and plans outlined above.

Practical Applications of 5G Connectivity as Example of Material Soci-Economic Benefit: -

Education:

The relationship between 5G and education is evolving at a massive rate with educators exploring the relevance of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies for education. Crucially, VR can support remote learning, allowing students a presence in the classroom even when working elsewhere.

5G's ability to deliver real-time information (low latency), ultra-fast speeds (critical for high definition images and video), increased capacity and heightened security will support learning on the job, thanks to technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) goggles, which can give engineers real-time instructions on how to fix a machine on a production line as an example.

Health:


Patients across the country are now becoming accustomed to relying on remote health services such as NHS 111, virtual GP appointments, and ordering online deliveries of essential medical supplies.

5G will prove critical in providing the infrastructure required to deliver remote health services over the next decade. By design, 5G's ability to deliver real-time information (low latency), ultra-fast speeds (critical for high definition images and video), increased capacity and heightened security are going to be fundamental in scaling the patient benefits of digital healthcare and keeping medical records secure and private. For instance, trials have

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that connecting ambulance crews to expert resources using 5G allows paramedics with doctors and conduct specialist procedures in real time whilst on the road.

There is a demand for mobile connectivity in areas where geography, logistics or ecc – or a combination of all 3, make it difficult. Mobile network capacity needs to grow the demand of mobile users, who are consuming ever increasing amounts of data.

Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that:

‘Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed developme positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools av. including .permission in principle, and work proactively with applicant: developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental condit. the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applica. sustainable development where possible’.

Providing improved 3G and 4G coverage and capacity and new 5G service provisic area will fully meet paragraph 38 of the NPPF, the aspirations of the City of Durham Local Plan (Saved Policies), the County Durham Plan, the North East Enterprise Partnership – Digital for Growth, and the North East SEP.

The social and economic benefits are a significant material consideration which s weighed against the visual impact associated with the upgrade to the existing r station in this location. HM Treasury outlined such benefits in its report ‘Fixing the Foundations: Creating a More Prosperous Nation’ – July 2015. Paragraph 7.1 of the plan stated that reliat and high quality fixed and mobile broadband connections support growth in pr efficiency and labour force participation across the whole economy. They enable new z more efficient business processes, access to new markets and support flexible worki working from home.

Paragraph 7.2 goes on to highlight strong support for high quality c infrastructure. It states

‘ by reducing red tape and barriers to investment, the Government will st market to deliver the internationally competitive fixed and mobile digita communications infrastructure the UK’s businesses need to thrive and grow, and v will enable the UK to remain at the forefront of the digital economy. The Govern. is working with business so that the market can play the lead role in delivering a, the ambitions set out in the Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy, pub March, of near universal 4G and ultrafast broadband coverage.’


Indeed, MPs have noted in parliament that the UKs Superfast Broadband connec ‘relatively poor’ and businesses were losing out from patchy coverage.

The Government recognises that widespread coverage of mobile connectivity is essent people and businesses. People expect to be connected where they live, wor

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travel. That is why the Government is committed to extending mobile coverage further across the UK, with continuous mobile connectivity provided to roads and to being a world leader in 5G.

This will allow everyone in the country to benefit from the economic widespread mobile coverage. As well as improved mobile signal, 5G network is crucial to drive productivity and growth across the sectors that local areas are focusing on through their emerging Local Industrial Strategies. Enabling and planning for 5G implementation is central to achieving the Government's objective to deliver proper connectivity at local level and enable all places to share in the proceeds of growth.

The Government is determined to ensure the UK receives the coverage and connectivity it needs. To this end, the Government wants to be a world leader in 5G, the next generation of wireless connectivity, and for communities to benefit from the investments in the new technology. The proposed installation will fully support these national aspirations.

The case for 5G is compelling as it will bring faster, more responsive and reliable connectivity than ever before. More than any previous generation of mobile networks, 5G has the potential to improve the way people live, work and travel, and to deliver significant benefits to the economy and industry through the ability to connect more devices to the Internet at the same time, creating the so-called "Internet of Things". This will enable communities to manage traffic flow and control energy usage, monitor patient health remotely, and increase productivity for business and farmers, all through the real-time management of data.

The Local Government Association (LGA) has produced a Councillor's Guide to 5G Connectivity and sets out some of the benefits of 5G technology:


- Faster mobile broadband and a more consistent experience in congested areas with a very high number of devices.
- Industrial applications, enabling businesses to improve their productivity, for example through predictive maintenance and real-time analytics.
- Internet of Things (IoT) services, many of which will help councils and businesses deliver services more efficiently including:
 - o Transport and logistics: connected parcels and fleet tracking.
 - o Health and social care.
 - o Environmental monitoring: sensors monitoring air quality and water pollution in real-time.
 - o Smart agriculture and smart animal farming, smart retailing.
 - o Connected and autonomous cars: allowing cars to communicate with each other, other road users and even the road infrastructure.

Further to the Government's commitment to improve connectivity, on 24th November 2017 the new permitted development rights for telecommunication operators came into force, designed to lift the restrictions on mobile operators such as the significance and weight the Government place upon the benefits attached to modern connectivity.

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A National Needs Assessment – A Vision for UK Infrastructure was also published in October 2016 ([https://www.ice.org.uk/getattachment/media-and-policy/policy/national-needs-assessment-a-vision-for-uk-infrastr/National-Needs-Assessment-PDF-\(1\).pdf.aspx](https://www.ice.org.uk/getattachment/media-and-policy/policy/national-needs-assessment-a-vision-for-uk-infrastr/National-Needs-Assessment-PDF-(1).pdf.aspx)). It sets out the infrastructure needs for the UK which includes the importance of digital technology. An extract of this assessment can be found below:

‘A lack of digital connectivity has a detrimental effect on business operations, productivity and output and hence competitiveness in the global marketplace. Securing digital connectivity is thus critical to the UK’s long-term prosperity. A key challenge for the digital sector is a persistent digital divide between those who have access to the latest technology and those who do not, with resulting social and economic exclusion, as dependence on e-services and digital communications increases’

The Assessment goes on to note that ‘Universal digital connectivity would equalise economic opportunity in that it enables participation in a digital economy’. Therefore, this Needs Assessment further explains the consequences of a lack of coverage and the effects this has on social and economic prosperity. This clearly highlights the importance of maintaining and enhancing high quality 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity in this area as well as providing new 5G in this area, where the social and economic benefits will outweigh the environmental considerations.

The Government’s continued strong support for connectivity is further evidenced by the DCMS who launched their UK wide Digital Connectivity Portal on 20 December 2020. The Digital connectivity portal provides guidance for local authorities and network providers on improving connectivity in local areas. The Government wants everyone in the UK to have access to world-class connectivity no matter where they live, work or travel. The Telecommunications Infrastructure Review outlines a package of measures to create the right market and policy conditions to deliver world-class connectivity for citizens and businesses. As a result, the pressure to upgrade the existing network to provide 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G is significant.

On the 23 September 2020, the former Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman MP spoke about the ongoing work by the Government and telecoms industry to boost the UK’s world-class digital connectivity in his keynote speech at Connected Britain 2020:


..I’d like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the industry for their tireless efforts in keeping us all connected through an unprecedented period of disruption.

..COVID has altered the way we live, work and most importantly, stay connected with family and friends. The digital infrastructure that keeps us all connected was an essential daily way of life under lockdown – and is now more important than ever as we head into recovery. Many of these changes – such as increased working from home – will stay with us for the foreseeable future.

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People have referred to the internet as “the fourth utility” – and it’s true. For countless people across the country, having fast and reliable broadband and a good mobile connection is essential and vital to our daily lives as gas, water and electricity.

That’s why I’m committed to working with you to ensure the entire nation has access to a world-class, next generation gigabit connectivity that is secure and resilient enough to deal with all sorts of future challenges.

This Government is ambitious for the UK’s digital infrastructure.

And because we know that more citizens are increasingly living their lives online, we are one of the earliest adopters of 5G coverage, with the majority of the population expected to have access to 5G by 2027.

...We know how important local authorities are to the delivery of digital infrastructure and that is why I have written to them, together with the Local Government Minister, to ensure that they can work more effectively with the industry...

...Turning to 5G, while the commercial rollout of 5G continues at pace, we’re pushing ahead with plans to make sure all sorts of industries benefit from this game-changing technology.

...since the start of the 5G Testbeds and trials programme, we’ve now funded 24 5G testbeds across the UK. Between them, those testbeds have trialled almost 100 different technologies, products and applications. And more importantly than ever, we are investing in a range of sectors to foster, build and grow 5G cross wider industry...

...The world is in the middle of a digital revolution. COVID has accelerated the process of digitising almost every part of our everyday lives and making the infrastructure that connects us more important than ever. That’s why it is at the top of the government’s agenda...

This Keynote Speech by Matt Warman MP highlights the importance that Government places on 5G and advanced, reliable, high quality 5G technology. To prevent this technology from being brought into the area would be contrary to the Government’s key aims.

In a more recent letter published by the former Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman MP on the 24 May 2021 addressed to the local authority chief executives he spoke further about the Government’s Commitment to extending mobile coverage:


‘Digital connectivity is – now, more than ever – vital to enable people to stay connected and businesses to grow. The demand for mobile data is increasing rapidly, and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how important it is that we all have access to reliable, high quality mobile connectivity...

...The Government is committed to extending mobile network coverage across the country, providing uninterrupted mobile signal on all major roads, and our ambition is for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027...

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...The National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) for Electronic Communications (the Framework) for Electronic Communications policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks including next generation mobile technology, such as 5G...

...In relation to electronic communications development, it also states that local authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only and they should not be required to prevent competition between different operators, or question the need for an electronic communications system. As set out in planning practice guidance, it is in the public interest for local planning authorities to have effective delegation arrangements in place so that decisions on planning applications that raise no significant planning issues are made quickly and that resources are appropriately concentrated on the applications of significant importance to the local area’

On the 1 October 2020, as part of the Speed up Britain Campaign, The Centre of Policy Studies published ‘Upwardly Mobile: How the UK can gain the full benefits of the 5G mobile revolution’. The report identifies what the 5G opportunities are and what the Government needs to do so we can all benefit from this vital new technology. It states that delay in the rollout of 5G could cost the country tens of billions of pounds in lost economic output. Former Government advisers Alex Jackman and Nick King argue that Government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda and the UK’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is at risk without a faster 5G rollout – to the tune of £41 billion.

The report highlights that if delays continue at their current rate, by 2027, over 10 million households and businesses could be missing out on vital digital connectivity. Improving digital infrastructure supports the Government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda, by helping local areas to retain and attract businesses and talent as well as by reducing regional inequalities.

The report states that ‘the UK must have a functioning network to now support the recovery from the pandemic, empowering businesses and communities with wider connectivity and preparing the ground for the services that 5G can provide’.


Using analysis by the independent consultancy Policy Points, the report estimates that if 5G coverage reaches a quarter more of the population than the Government’s current target of 51%, it will produce GDP gains of £41.7 billion by 2027. It highlights that the difference between the UK being a leader and a laggard in 5G adoption could be as much as £41.7 billion in incremental GDP over the coming decade, as estimated by the Communications Challenge Group.

The manufacturing, construction and agricultural sectors have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, and these would benefit significantly from improved connectivity. However, onerous planning rules and loopholes in existing legislation are slowing down the infrastructure upgrades needed to make the most of this mobile revolution in these sectors – needed for the recovery of these industries.

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Digital networks and services have underpinned our resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic and they will drive our recovery. By expanding them, we deliver not only immediate but also the essential foundation stone for future prosperity.

The report highlights that while 5G promises to create economic benefits through increased capacity, reliability and speed – vastly improving business productivity and removing barriers imposed by poor digital connectivity – the system is plagued by red tape.

The report acknowledges that the gains are not just at national level. A more extensive digital infrastructure helps local areas to attract and retain businesses and talent, thereby playing a vital role in reducing regional inequalities. Providing a supportive environment for digital infrastructure is one of the few things the Government can do that costs little, boosts productivity and helps level up the UK...the key is speed. **The faster a network is built, the greater the regional gains** (emphasis added). The telecommunications industry faces challenges on the front. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand on networks but the limited availability of new spectrum to provide additional capacity.

The report notes that the reliability and reach of 4G is more important than ever. It is not only both to quench immediate demand, and also to facilitate future 5G rollout, as the ubiquitous passive infrastructure will initially support both technologies. Every failure to provide better coverage not only presents an immediate opportunity loss for local business and connectivity but also has a bigger downstream economic impact. It acknowledges that the gains to business, equality gains for regions and economic gains for the country are on balance achievable as the networks they can access.

The report recommended that the Government should reform the strategic framework to compel local authorities to ensure that the needs of future mobile connectivity are adequately addressed in Local Plans and that new developments are assessed to show how they might impact, or could support, local connectivity.

In April 2021 the DCMS issued a further round of consultation on the ‘*proposed changes to permitted development rights for electronic communications infrastructure consultation*’. *The continuing support for high quality 5G service provision continues to be emphasised:*


‘Now, more than ever, people need access to dependable and consistent mobile coverage where they live, work and travel. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital connectivity and ensuring that networks have the capacity and resilience to meet demand. Increased connectivity will also be key to our recovery. As the UK seeks to build back better, our changes to the planning system will help to extend and improve mobile coverage, including in rural areas, to communities and businesses

The government is committed to extending mobile geographical coverage across the UK and providing uninterrupted mobile signal on all major roads, and to be a leader in 5G...The government is investing £200 million in a programme of 5G tests and trials to encourage investment in 5G so that communities and businesses

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benefit from this new technology. Our ambition is for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. The increased connectivity and capacity offered by 5G is opening-up the potential for new, innovative services for individuals and the industry...

It is also essential that the planning system can effectively support the delivery of mobile infrastructure that we need' ...

The government response set out that, subject to a technical consultation on the merits of the proposals, including the appropriate environmental protection and safeguards, we would take forward changes to:

Enable the deployment of radio equipment housing on land without the need for prior approval, up to specified limits and excluding sites of special scientific interest to support 5G deployment;

Strengthen existing masts up to specified limits to enable sites to be upgraded to support 5G and for mast sharing without the need for prior approval;

Enable the deployment of building-based masts nearer to highways to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage, subject to prior approval and specified limits; and,

Enable higher new masts to deliver better mobile coverage and mast sharing, subject to prior approval and specified limits' .

The proposed installation in this location will allow the operator to maintain and provide new and improved high quality 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity and new 5G coverage and capacity provision supporting the Government's aim of 'focusing on ensuring that everyone is connected to the information superhighway' and help to meet its target that the majority of the population will have access to a 5G signal by 2027. This fully meets the aspirations of the NPPF.

An installation in this location will ensure that the expansion of the electronic communications network is facilitated and that high quality communications infrastructure is provided in the immediate area. This is in full accordance with the operator's 5G license obligations and the Council's aims and aspirations to expand and improve digital infrastructure as required and to have the latest high quality 5G infrastructure, promoting and growing the digital economy and increasing digital inclusion.

Summary

It is not possible to upgrade the existing radio base station at this site as the mast is not structurally capable of hosting the equipment required to provide 5G coverage in addition to the existing 2G, 3G and 4G coverage. Therefore a new installation for VMO2 is needed to provide this operator with the latest 2G, 3G 4G and 5G technology. However, a replacement monopole within the same fenced compound at a greater height will provide the required capacity and new 5G coverage whilst keeping environmental impact to a minimum.


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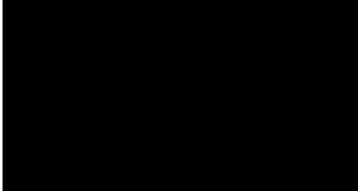
The proposed mast is situated at the site of an existing telecommunications installation which has been in situ for many years. The proposed location is therefore the most feasible option in this area, following the sequential approach set out in national planning policy guidance. There are numerous other vertical structures in the vicinity of the proposed mast, including lighting columns, and large trees. As this is a prior approval application, the Government confirms that this is permitted development, akin to outline planning permission, with just the finer details of siting and appearance to be considered by the local authority. It is considered that the proposed installation will assimilate with the surrounding landscape, as the existing installation has done for some time, and not appear alien in its immediate area.

The proposed height at 20m is essential in order for the antennas to clear the surrounding urban clutter, and ensure the antennas are able to reach the target coverage. This will provide replacement high quality 2G, 3G and 4G, and new 5G service provision to Coxhoe, Durham. This will fully meet the national Government's aim of '*ensuring that everyone is connected to the information superhighway*' and the national policies set out in the NPPF. If the height of the column were to be reduced then the antennas would not operate effectively, leading to a degraded service for the operator's customers, especially for the higher frequency technologies including 4G technology and new 5G service provision.

Site selection was progressed in accordance with the applicant's licence obligations, in the NPPF and the Code of Practice and represents the least environmentally and technically suitable, available option.

The social and economic benefits of providing reliable and high quality mobile broadband connections including 5G support growth in productivity, efficiency and participation across the whole economy. This is fully supported by the NPPF and City of Durham Local Plan (Saved Policies), the County Durham Plan, the North East E Partnership – Digital for Growth, and the North East SEP and the UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy. These benefits are strong material considerations which outweigh any potential loss of visual amenity to the surrounding area.


Confirmation that submitted drawings have been checked for accuracy

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Signed:



Date:

13/11/2023

Position:

Town Planner(on behalf of Cornerstone)

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