

Supplementary Information Form

1. Site Details	
Site Name	Syke Road
Site Address	Syke Road, Syke, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, OL12 9TQ
NGR	E389991, N415141
Site Number Ref	ROD154
Site Type ¹	Macro

2. Pre Application Check List				
Site selection				
Was a local planning authority mast register available to check for suitable sites by the operator or the local planning authority?	Yes	No		
If no, please explain why: No register available				
Was the industry site database checked for suitable sites by the operator?	Yes	No		
Pre-application consultation with local planning authority				
Date of written offer of pre-application consultation				
Was there pre-application contact?	Yes	No		
Date of pre-application contact	23/10/2023			
Name of contact	Rosalind Gralton			
Summary of outcome / main issues raised:				
A formal pre-application enquiry was issued to the Local Planning Authority, seeking feedback on two separate locations within the area, which had been identified as offering viable solutions for a replacement base station. One of these locations was the application site.				

¹ Macro or Micro

The feedback provided by Ms Rosalind Gralton, stated that the application site would not be considered acceptable for a monopole of the proposed height.

Ten Commitments Consultation

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model

Red

Amber

Green

Outline Consultation carried out:

As part of the pre-application consultation exercise undertaken as part of this scheme, notification letters were issued to the local Ward Councillors of the Healey Ward. Detailed planning drawings were provided and feedback was requested.

Furthermore, consultation letters were issued to residential properties within the area, and feedback on the scheme was requested.

Summary of outcome / main issues raised:

A response was received from Ward Councillor Sean O'Neill, who stated that all three Ward Councillors were in agreement, and could not support the proposed development at this location.

A number of representations were received from local residents, citing the visual impact of the scheme.

School / College

Location of site in relation to school / college (include name of school / college):

Given the distance between the application site and any schools within the local area, it was considered that no consultation was necessary.

Outline of consultation carried out with school / college (include evidence of consultation):

N/A

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

N/A

Civil Aviation Authority / Secretary of State for the Defence / Aerodrome Operator consultation (only required for an application for prior approval)

Will the structure be within 3km of an aerodrome or airfield?	Yes	No
Has the Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for Defence/Aerodrome Operator been notified	Yes	No
Details of response: N/A		
<i>Developers Notice (only required for an application for prior approval)</i>		
Copy of Developers Notice enclosed	Yes	No
Date served	25 th January 2024 – Proof of Delivery of Developers Notice included within the application	
3. Proposed Development		
This proposal is required to provide continued mobile coverage to the local area for EE and H3G (known as the operator 'Three'). Network coverage is currently provided by a base station at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate, which is soon to be lost from the network, for reasons beyond the Operator's control. In order to address the 'coverage gap' which will be created, a permanent, replacement base station must be deployed, or the area will suffer from a loss of communications and data services for EE and H3G in the future. It should be noted at this juncture that two additional sites are required to replicate the service footprint provided by the existing installation at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate. The Local Authority will be aware of the allowed appeal at Whitworth Road (Appeal Ref: APP/P4225/W/22/3310956). The proposed development at Syke Road will work in tandem with the approved 20m-high monopole at Whitworth Road to provide not only replacement, but enhanced, network coverage, capacity and connectivity for two Mobile Network Operators (EE and Three UK). It should also be noted that, on a wider scale, the Operators networks will be disrupted if a replacement site, which adequately replicates the lost coverage, cannot be identified and integrated into the network at the earliest opportunity. EE and H3G's current base station which services this area is positioned on the old mill building at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate, Lower Healey, Fieldhouse Road, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, OL12 0AA, approximately 520m south west of the application site. This base station provided a considerable level of network coverage to the surrounding area, as shown on the accompanying operator coverage plots. That installation is being decommissioned from the network, for reasons beyond the Operator's control. As such, if no permanent, replacement, installation is deployed to service the surrounding area, then a permanent 'coverage gap' will be created in the area which was previously serviced by Fieldhouse Industrial Estate. As outlined above, this Site will be what is		

known as a split-cell, working in tandem with the recently allowed Whitworth Road appeal site. The 20m-high monopole at Whitworth Road will provide a partial replacement of the existing network services provided by Fieldhouse Industrial Estate. However, a second installation is required to ensure that all network services are replicated and that no ‘coverage gaps’, within the wider area, are created. The proposed development will address this issue by not only replicating the previous coverage footprint, but by providing improved connectivity, capacity and coverage, in the form of 2G, 3G, 4G and brand-new 5G services for both Operators.

The proposed development will be located at Syke Road, Syke, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, OL12 9TQ (NGR: E389991, N415141) thereafter referred to as ‘the Site’. Figure 1, below, shows the approximate location of the Site. The Site is situated on a flat parcel of grassland, known as Cronkeyshaw Common and is a designated Greenspace Corridor. Residential housing resides around the Common including two Grade II listed cottages north of the Site.



Figure 1 – Aerial imagery of proposed site (approximate site outlined in red) (Source: Google Maps 2024)

The Site has been chosen as the most viable town planning solution within the local area which will meet the necessary coverage requirements of the Operator. The proposed development will ensure continued mobile network coverage is provided to the surrounding area; providing connectivity, capacity and coverage for local residents and businesses and ensuring the next step in technological progression (i.e. 5G network coverage) is available within Rochdale.

The Site is not located within any Conservation Area, or in close proximity to any Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments or other Heritage Assets. In addition, the proposed works are not located in close proximity to any designated sites such as SSSIs, SPAs, SACs, or National Nature Reserves.

The proposed site has been specifically selected to ensure that the existing network coverage is continued, by enhancing the level of services provided to the local community, when compared to the current network services.

The location of the proposed apparatus has been specifically selected to ensure that it sits as far away as practicable from residential properties, and offers the most suitable town planning and environmental solution for this area.

When the impact of the proposed structure is assessed against the provision of economic, social and environmental benefits that will be brought forward by the proposal, there is considered to be significant favour towards approving the scheme.

The 'sharing' of the proposed monopole must be acknowledged. The necessary apparatus to allow this to happen must be deployed, and can be done so via the proposed monopole. Innovative design now allows the antennas to be 'stacked' within the column, rather than being attached to the upper section of the monopole and creating a larger visual impact on the wider streetscene. The proposed monopole is the slimmest solution available to the Operators for deployment.

Whilst the Applicant's accept that the height of the installation will result in a visual feature on the landscape, the slimline nature of the development will ensure that the visual impact is reduced as far as practicable. When this impact is assessed against the provision of economic, social and environmental benefits that will be brought forward by the proposal, there is considered to be significant favour towards approving the scheme. The justification for the height of the proposed installation is that the next stage of technological advancement (5G) will be available from this network cell, providing new cutting-edge coverage for two major mobile Operators to the local area.

The proposed development will provide new cutting-edge 5G coverage, connectivity and capacity for two major mobile Operators to the local area. The proposed apparatus only serves **one** function – to provide mobile network coverage to the local area. The equipment has no other function. As such, the appearance of the equipment, and the height of the equipment, is dictated by functionality and technical constraints. Indeed, the further relaxation of Permitted Development rights by Central Government in early 2022, shows a clear indication that 20m is now the accepted height for new base stations, be that within or outside of designated areas. It should also be noted that this juncture that the associated ground-based equipment cabinets qualify as outright Permitted Development.

As outlined above, the 'siting' of the proposed development has been carefully selected given the very geographically, restricted search area. Given that the Whitworth Road appeal site will replace the southern-section of the existing coverage footprint, the search area for the second base station is restricted to the northern-section of the existing coverage footprint. As such, limited siting options are available within the local area, when the Operator's technical and operational needs are taken into consideration.

It is considered that the proposal in front of the Council is acceptable, as this development will ensure network coverage for two mobile operators is provided to the local area, and nullify the impact caused by the removal of services when the existing base station at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate is decommissioned. The proposed development will provide 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G network coverage for EE, and 3G, 4G and 5G network coverage for Three. Additionally, this community will be at the forefront of the next generation of technology (5G).

Given the need to integrate a permanent replacement base station, prior to the removal of the existing base station, as well as limited options within the established target area, it is considered that the best town planning solution has been brought forward as part of this application. Ensuring that the current network coverage is replicated is of vital importance, especially given the modern-day circumstances which have come as a consequence of the Covid-19 global pandemic – with workers now adopting a more hybrid working pattern and leading to an inevitable increase in data consumption in all settings – be it residential, urban, retail, commercial or industrial.

It should also be noted that EE have been awarded the contract to provide the Emergency Services Network (ESN). This network is currently provided by Airwave. However, over time, the ESN will be gradually migrated onto the EE network, with EE then isolating their 4G network to accommodate the ESN. Naturally, EE can only isolate their 4G network once base stations are of a level to provide 5G coverage. At that point, EE will provide 2G, 3G and 5G commercial network services and 4G will be switched off 'commercially' and will provide the Emergency Services Network for the Ambulance Service, Fire Service and Police Service. This proposal will be 5G-ready at the point of deployment and it is submitted that the provision of the ESN to Rochdale is a material planning consideration, and should be given planning weight when assessing the application. It is considered that the proposal in front of the Council is acceptable.

Type of Structure (e.g. tower, mast, etc): telecommunications monopole

Description:

The installation of a new 20m-high monopole with wrap-around cabinet supporting 9no. antenna apertures and 2no. 300mm transmission dishes; plus 5no. ground-based equipment cabinets; and ancillary development thereto.

Overall Height: 20m

Materials (as applicable)

Tower / mast etc. – type of material and external colour

Steel (unless otherwise suggested by the Local Authority)

Equipment housing – type of material and external colour

Steel – Light Grey RAL 7035 (unless otherwise suggested by the Local Authority)

Reasons for choice of Design

In designing this telecommunications installation, the applicants have sought to achieve a balance between the technical requirements of the Operator and minimising environmental impact as far as was practicable. It, however, must be acknowledged that technical constraints heavily influenced the design and limited the scope to alter the appearance of the site to a significant degree.

The application proposes to install a 20m-high monopole with wrap-around cabinet supporting 9no. antenna apertures and 2no. 300mm transmission dishes; plus 5no. ground-based equipment cabinets; and ancillary development thereto. This scheme is proposed to replace the outgoing base station at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate.

The choice of design at the application site is governed by two main factors; the context and visual amenity of the area; and, the technical requirements.

Technical Objective and Technical Requirements

The objective of this site is to ensure permanent network coverage to the local area is continued, and enhanced, and disruption to the wider network is not caused, when the existing base station is removed. The long-term retention of network services is therefore of paramount importance and at risk until a permanent base station is integrated into the network.

When any telecommunications site is decommissioned, there is an obvious impact on the network. In order to pre-empt any loss of network coverage when the existing site is removed, a new site has been identified which offers the best technical solution and replicates coverage to the target area, currently provided by the existing installation at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate. If the existing site is removed without a replacement site, there is a two-fold effect – the loss of coverage to the local area; and a greater disruption to the wider network. Each telecommunications site connects to another to create a network. If one network cell is removed, the connection to the adjacent network cells is lost, leading to impacts reaching far further than the immediate consumers.

Should this proposal not proceed, the local area will be left with a large coverage hole once the existing base station is removed. This proposal will fill the ‘coverage hole’ and ensure that there is no down-time within the network, thereby addressing any wider implications for the network itself. The need for the proposed installation is henceforth established and justified. Additionally, the new installation will be 5G ready and therefore able to provide improved network coverage to the local area for two major mobile Operators.

By way of background information, in designing a radio base station it is necessary to incorporate certain vital elements and to work around a number of technical constraints. There are three main elements to a radio base station; the cabin or cabinets which contain the equipment used to generate the radio signal(s), the supporting structure that holds the antennas in the air (or fixes them to a building or structure) and the antennas themselves, which emit the radio signals (along with any necessary amplifier or receiver units).

Other elements necessary for the base station to function are the power source (a meter in a cabinet or a generator on sites where a REC supply cannot be utilised), feeder cables that link the equipment housing to the antennas, link dishes and the various support structures, grillages and fixings, often referred to in general terms as “development ancillary to” the base station.

The antenna height is determined by a specialist network radio engineer using specialist software which factors in the area that coverage is required; the relationship between the selected site location and existing cell sites in the linked network; and variances in land levels and elements such as nearby trees or buildings, which can block or weaken signals.

There will be 5no. ground-based equipment cabinets which are required to house the radio equipment and will be positioned in a neat arrangement at ground level. It should be noted that

these ground-based equipment cabinets are outright Permitted Development, and require no formal approval or consent from the Local Authority.

Visual Amenity

The applicants have given due regard in designing all new sites to limit the visual impact through good design. In this instance, the proposed installation is subject to technical and build constraints. That notwithstanding, it is submitted that the appropriate siting and design put forth will mitigate any potential impact on the site and its surroundings to an acceptable level.

To achieve the required coverage and overall network improvement for EE and H3G, a 20m monopole with wrap around cabinet is required. The proposed installation will also be 5G ready at the point of deployment. Additionally, and as discussed within this statement, the proposed development will also provide the new Emergency Services Network (ESN) for the Ambulance, Fire and Rescue, and Police Services. This is an important planning consideration and should be acknowledged in any planning assessment.

Whilst the applicants accept that there will be some level of visual impact, when this is compared to the numerous social and economic benefits which will be brought forward with the proposal, it is considered that the application should be deemed acceptable, and therefore receive Officer support.

The applicants encourage the Council to make a clear distinction between ‘visibility’ and ‘harm’, when assessing this proposal. At 20 metres in height, the structure will be visible. However, being able to see something does not immediately infer that it is either inappropriate or harmful. The applicants submit that, despite the proposed development being visible, it is not harmful, and that the height of the apparatus is solely dictated by its function. This must be acknowledged by the Council.

As outlined in the General Permitted Development Order, the deployment of mobile phone base stations, up to a height of 20 metres, is accepted in principle by virtue of the legislation. This position has been confirmed by the Planning Inspectorate in a number of appeal decisions.

For example, in allowing appeal APP/E2205/W/20/3261389, which proposed the installation of a 20m-high telecommunications monopole and associated ground-based equipment cabinets, the Inspector included the following in their decision notice:

*“Part 16 of the Order establishes that **the proposal is permitted development** and therefore it is accepted in principle by virtue of the legislation. **Furthermore, there is no requirement to have regard to the development plan as there would be for any development requiring planning permission.** Nevertheless, Policies SP1, SP6 and ENV13 of the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan to 2030 are material considerations as they relate to issues of siting and appearance. In particular, they seek to secure high quality design and to avoid development that would cause loss or substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets. **Similarly, the National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration and this includes a section on supporting high quality communications**“ (emphasis added).*

In another example, in allowing appeal APP/G4240/W/18/3201704, which proposed the installation of a 20m-high telecommunications monopole and associated ground-based equipment cabinets, the Inspector included the following in their decision notice:

***“The permission granted under the GPDO is equal to an outline planning permission and the consideration of the proposed development is limited to its siting and appearance, not the principle of the development”** (emphasis added).*

Due consideration has been given to the process and the proposal put forward is the best available option – it both achieves the technical requirements and does not bring unacceptable harm to the character of the area.

It is anticipated that this installation will become an accepted part of the built environment over time – as is the case with the existing installation at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate, as well as existing telecommunications base stations which are commonplace within the Local Authority’s wider jurisdiction.

Whilst it is accepted that the structure will be visible, it is considered that the economic, social and environmental benefits brought forward by retaining network coverage across the local area outweighs any harm that the proposal may cause.

It is considered, overall, that the design is appropriate to the site and surrounding area and avoids any unacceptable level of impact.

4. Technical Information

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

Yes

No

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 cannot unknowingly enter areas close to the antennas where exposure may exceed the relevant guidelines.

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

In order to minimise interference within its own network and with other radio networks, EE (UK) Ltd and H3G (UK) Limited operates its network in such a way the radio frequency power outputs are kept to the lowest levels commensurate with effective service provision.

As part of EE (UK) Ltd and H3G (UK) Limited’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 the transmitter 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 systems. The conditions of the licence are mandated by Ofcom, an agency of national 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 with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest.		
Frequency	GSM 1865.5-1846.5 MHz	
Modulation characteristics ²	GMSK & QPSK	
Power output (expressed in EIRP in dBW per carrier) In order to minimise interference within its own network and with other radio networks, EE (UK) Ltd and H3G (UK) Limited operates its network in such a way that radio frequency power outputs are kept to the lowest levels commensurate with effective service provision. As part of EE (UK) Ltd and H3G (UK) Limited's network, the radio base station that is the subject of this application will be configured to operate in this way.	56 dBm	
5. Technical Justification		
The proposed site is required as a replacement base station, rather than a 'new' base station, for the area. EE and H3G (known as the operator 'Three') have had an existing radio base station located on the rooftop of Fieldhouse Industrial Estate, approximately 520m south west of the application site for circa 19 years (since 2005). This installation is due to be decommissioned from the network for reasons beyond the Operators control and hence the need for this Site. To ensure network coverage is replaced, a new base station must be deployed which will satisfy the current technical needs of the network and ensure continued provision of mobile services within this area, as well as being 5G-ready at the stage of deployment. The existing installation at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate provides the existing networks services to the surrounding area, and, as outlined in this statement, it is due to be lost for reasons beyond the Operator's control. As such a replacement site must be deployed to ensure there is continued operator connectivity, capacity and coverage servicing businesses and residents in the local area. In this instance a single base station will not replicate the existing coverage footprint. As such two new base stations are required to work in tandem to enhance the networks services in the local area, replicating existing 2G, 3G and 4G coverage, as well as providing brand-new 5G coverage to the surrounding area. The first of these installations is situated on Whitworth Road – allowed by appeal on 8th June 2022 (Appeal Ref: APP/P4225/W/22/3310956).		

² The modulation method employed in GSM is GMSK (Gaussian Minimum Shift Keying) which is a form of Phase Modulation.

The modulation method employed in UMTS is QPSK (Quad Phase Shift Keying) which is another form of Phase Modulation.

Base stations use radio signals to connect mobile devices and phones to the network, enabling people to send and receive calls, texts, emails, pictures, TV and downloads. The base stations are connected to each other (by cables or wireless technology) to create a network. The area each base station covers is called a cell. Each cell overlaps with its neighbouring cells to create a continuous network. There are several variables that determine the size and shape of each cell.

As base stations are low-powered radio transmitters they each have a limited range, meaning that they generally need to be located close to (or within) the target area which requires coverage. If a base station is moved too far away from the target area, then it is likely that some sections of the target area will remain without the network services which the Operator aims to provide.

When an existing site is lost from the network, as is the case with this scenario, it will result in a very specific “coverage gap” and an alternative site needs to be identified to ensure that this gap is filled. The consequence of not filling this coverage gap is that users of the networks find that the services they previously had access to are either limited or removed. This is what the Operators are aiming to avoid in this instance, with the identification of a new location for a cell site to service this area.

High-quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth and that high-speed broadband technology and other communications networks can also play a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.

The UK Government recognises the benefits to commerce, industry and the public in general, and so places great emphasis on the benefits of mobile telecommunications to modern life and this is promoted throughout the planning system. The very high level of mobile phone use and ownership within the UK population is a very clear indication of the public’s overwhelming acceptance of the benefits of mobile communications, which requires the installation and maintenance of base stations to provide the necessary connection between the mobile phones and the UK telecommunications network.

The Planning Inspectorate too has in recent years continually recognised the importance of this issue and cited it in appeal decisions that have overturned the decisions of local authorities across the UK where there has been a failure to apply due weight to the value of connectivity to social and economic prosperity in the assessment of applications made for telecommunications development, even in protected or sensitive areas.

As an example, in October 2018 the decision of Winchester City Council to refuse prior approval for the installation of a 17.5m high monopole and associated equipment housing, required to replace an established site being lost from Vodafone’s network, was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (CTIL and Vodafone Vs Winchester City Council, appeal reference APP/L1765/W/18/3197522). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated that:

*“I attach significant weight to the public benefit arising from the continuation of local service provision.....Having regard to all relevant considerations.. **my findings are that the proposal’s public benefit in maintaining and enhancing local telecommunication coverage and capacity would outweigh the limited harm arising to the character and appearance of the area**” (emphasis added).*

In November 2019, the decision of Woking Borough Council to refuse prior approval for the installation of a 20m high monopole and associated equipment housing, which would provide

'in-fill' network coverage for EE, was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (EE Ltd. Vs Woking Borough Council, appeal reference APP/A3655/W/19/3234027). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated that:

“the mast and antennas are reasonably slim and have an uncluttered form and thus would not be unduly intrusive in a wider panorama. Accordingly, the visual impact of the proposed base station would be limited, even when the vegetation is not in full leaf. It would also be seen in the context of the existing structures in the immediate area. Therefore, although the proposed development would not make a positive contribution to the street scene, neither would it be significantly harmful to the appearance of the area” (emphasis added).

In October 2020, the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council to refuse planning permission for the installation of a 15-metre-high monopole incorporating shrouded antenna and supporting 2no external dishes was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (EE Ltd and H3G UK Ltd Vs Elmbridge Borough Council, appeal reference APP/K3605/W/19/3243927). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated that:

“The mast would be taller and thicker than the existing nearby street lighting columns, road signs and overhead cable poles. Due to its height, the mast would be visible in local views from the public domain and from some residential properties in proximity....However, such masts are becoming more commonplace within the urban environment and so it would not appear as an alien or unexpected feature” (our emphasis).

In June 2021, the decision of Sheffield City Council to refuse their Prior Approval for the installation of a 20-metre-high monopole and associated cabinets was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (MBNL Limited Vs Sheffield City Council, appeal reference APP/J4423/W/21/3268791). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated that:

“Paragraph 80 of the Framework advises that significant weight should be attached to the economic benefits of providing and enhancing electronic communications infrastructure. Paragraph 112 advises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being, and that the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology, such as 5G, should be supported.

The proposal would reinstate 2G, 3G and 4G coverage within the area as well as providing 5G coverage, services would collectively increase network capacity and provide ultra-fast and more reliable mobile connectivity, capable of handling ever-increasing data requirements. The development would provide extensive social and economic benefits to individuals, businesses, and public services, including education and healthcare. The Council does not question the social and economic benefits that would result from the proposal but concludes that they do not outweigh the harm found. However, as no suitable alternative sites have been identified, I attach substantial weight to the benefits that would result from the proposal.

In weighing all the above matters, although I have found that the siting and appearance of the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area, I consider the substantial social and economic benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm identified” (emphasis added).

It is considered that when the balancing method advocated in the NPPF is applied to the proposal, where the need and significant public benefit of ensuring the best available network coverage is provided, especially given the current times in which we find ourselves ensconced a hybrid-level of remote working, is balanced against the appearance and level of associated visual impact of the proposed site, that the application proposal is positively in favour and is considered wholly appropriate.

In November 2021, the decision of the London Borough of Hillingdon Council to refuse their Prior Approval for the installation of a 20-metre-high monopole and associated cabinets was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (MBNL Limited Vs London Borough of Hillingdon Council, appeal reference APP/R5510/W/21/3269903). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated that:

“Based on the evidence before me, the height of the monopole would be substantially taller than the mature trees which bound the site. Accordingly, it would represent a significant departure from the established height of existing lampposts with the height of the proposed structure representing a visually dominant addition to the existing environment. Due to the substantial height of the monopole, and plethora of associated cabinets, the proposal would detract from the pleasing greenery within which it would be located. This would harm the established landscape feature which positively contributes to the surrounding area as well as causing some harm to the visual amenities of surrounding properties, particularly those within converted office premises. (emphasis added).

“The proposal would also be located relatively close to three Grade II Listed Buildings. However, because the proposal does not seek planning permission or permission in principle, the duty established within Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, does not apply to this proposal. Despite this, the Framework still requires the heritage implications to be fully considered”. (emphasis added).

“Accordingly, although the siting and appearance of the proposed development would cause some limited harm to the setting of the nearby listed buildings, I am satisfied that the economic and social benefits of the proposal, would outweigh this harm” (emphasis added).

Again, in November 2021, the decision of Worthing Borough Council to refuse prior approval for the installation of a 20m high monopole with wraparound cabinet, which would replace an existing 12.5m high monopole on the same site, was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (MBNL on behalf of EE (UK) Ltd. & H3G (UK) Ltd Vs Worthing Borough Council, appeal reference APP/M3835/W/21/3272207). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated that:

However, the increase in height is dictated by the intention to upgrade two networks to 5G technology. This technology uses higher frequency transmissions, which have a lower range and a greater sensitivity to obstructions within the area of signal coverage. The need for higher masts to enable the upgrade of existing networks to 5G technology has been recognised by the Government through permitted development rights which enable taller masts.

*The proposal would replace an existing mast. **The opportunity for an alternative location is therefore limited, given the restrictions imposed by the two established telecommunications cellular networks of which it would form part.***

*The principle of development including a mast up to 20m in height is established by the permitted development right in the Order, and consideration of its siting and appearance needs to be viewed in that context. In this case, **while the increased height of the mast would have a greater impact on the character and appearance of the area, its height is the minimum required to deliver 5G technology.** The appearance of the mast as a single monopole painted light grey is preferable to other mast designs, and comparable to the design of the existing mast.*

***I conclude that the installation is the least intrusive that can be achieved within the technical limitations of 5G technology, and that any harm arising from the additional visual prominence of the mast is outweighed by the benefits accruing from the provision of advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure”** (emphasis added).*

Whilst the above appeals relate to the deployment of new ground-based installations, there are also now a number of appeals which have allowed the upgrading of existing installations up to a height of 20m. As such, it is clear that 20m is now the recognised, and accepted, height of telecommunications apparatus within the streetscene – regardless of setting – be it residential, suburban, commercial, or industrial. Given that the proposal before the Council is for an 20m installation, it is submitted that the same conclusions can be drawn from all six appeal schemes outlined above – in that the high quality provision of telecommunications services, and the public benefits that they provide, is essential to the economic and social prosperity of the local area, and, when compared to the visual impact that each scheme would cause, the development was found in favour. The same assessment can be applied in this instance.

Given that appeals APP/K3605/W/19/3243927 (15m); APP/L1765/W/18/3197522 (17.5m); APP/J4423/W/21/3268791 (20m); APP/A3655/W/19/3234027 (20m); APP/R5510/W/21/3269903 (20m) and APP/M3835/W/21/3272207 (20m) proposed brand-new monopoles measuring 15, 17.5m, and 20m, respectively, all were considered to be acceptable, even if they resulted in clear harm to their surroundings. Additionally, appeals APP/E2205/W/20/3261389 and APP/G4240/W/18/3201704, which were discussed in Section Three of this statement, proposed 20 metre-high monopoles and were both also considered acceptable by the Planning Inspector. The proposed development will have a top height of 20m.

The importance of continued, and improved, telecommunications network coverage cannot be underestimated, especially throughout the years 2020 and 2021, when the dependence on these networks has been higher than ever before. This dependence has continued into 2022 as our online shopping, gaming, and social habits have changed, post-pandemic, as well as many people adopting a working-from-home or hybrid work pattern. There are now a plethora of appeal cases which have been considered appropriate by the Planning Inspectorate for installations very similar to the one proposed here, even within close proximity to residential housing.

Very recently, in March 2022, the decision of Broadland District Council to refuse their Prior Approval for the installation of a 17.5-metre-high monopole and associated cabinets was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (MBNL Limited Vs Broadland District Council, appeal reference APP/K2610/W/21/3280694). Within the decision notice, the Inspector made specific reference to the ‘*Living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties*’, stating that:

“At the location where the mast is proposed to be located there are houses which face onto, but are not accessed from, Dussindale Drive. These houses are set behind hedges and fences and separated from the proposed site of the mast by a cycleway and footpath. They also have front gardens and drives between the front elevation of the house and the cycleway and footpath. The proposed equipment cabinets would not be visible from these houses. However, the mast would be visible from the windows of their front elevations” (emphasis added).

“Policy GC4 of the DPD seeks, amongst other things, to consider ‘the impact upon the amenity of existing properties’ of new development. Whilst the proposed mast is significantly taller than other street fixtures in the area it has a slim profile and will be finished in a light grey colour. It is also set off the boundary with existing residential properties with a cycleway and footpath in between the proposed site and the boundary of the houses. In these respects, it is therefore consistent with Policy CG4 of the DPD” (emphasis added).

“Moreover, the residential properties have front gardens and drives between their front elevations and their boundaries. Consequently, given the slim profile of the mast, its light grey colour, and its distance from the front elevations of nearby properties I do not consider that its siting and appearance would unacceptably harm the outlook of the occupiers of these properties” (emphasis added).

Given that the Planning Inspectorate have, as recently as November 2021, determined that similar installations to the one proposed are considered acceptable within close proximity to residential properties, then a smaller installation, in a similar setting, should be considered equally as acceptable. It is therefore clear that Council support should also be offered to this scheme.

Furthermore, whilst the applicants do submit that the best town planning solution has been brought forward as part of this application, **clear precedence has been set by the Planning Inspectorate which suggests that this should not be a determining factor, and that the best town planning option does not need to be brought forward.**

In October 2020, MBNL (EE Ltd and H3G UK Ltd) vs Elmbridge Borough Council, appeal reference APP/K3605/W/19/3243927, which has already been discussed within this statement, the Planning Inspector included the following in the Appeal Decision Notice:

“Interested parties indicate that there are alternative sites available for the proposed mast. However, given my conclusion on the main issue it is unnecessary to address the merits of alternative sites. There is no requirement in the Framework or the GPDO 2015 to select the best feasible siting” (our emphasis).

In April 2021, Cornerstone, Telefónica UK Ltd and Vodafone Ltd vs the Council of the London Borough of Havering, appeal reference APP/B5480/W/20/3251086, the Planning Inspector included the following in the Appeal Decision Notice:

“I note the Council’s reservations regarding the appellants’ list of alternative sites, and to that extent I accept that the appeal site has not been shown conclusively to be the least environmentally damaging option possible. But the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not support that approach. Given that I have

found no significant harm, it is unnecessary to consider other alternatives in any more detail” (emphasis added).

In May 2018, CTIL vs Sheffield City Council, appeal reference APP/J4423/W/17/3188962, the Planning Inspector included the following in the Appeal Decision Notice:

*“With regards alternative sites, I have noted the appellant’s submissions within the supplementary information as well as the contention of interested parties regarding the need for fuller consideration of siting. Nevertheless, I am mindful that even if alternative sites were available, **there is no requirement within the Framework or the GPDO for developers to select the best feasible siting where a site as proposed is considered to be acceptable**”* (emphasis added).

For the avoidance of doubt, the applicants do submit that the best environmental and town planning solution has been brought forward as part of this application, and an alternative site assessment has been included within this statement. It should, however, be noted that this is not required as part of the application, but rather forms part of the justification for site selection and outlines again, that no alternative, better, option could be identified within the local area that would satisfy the necessary technical criteria associated with a new base station.

At the time of writing, our dependence on network services and connectivity is ever more apparent. Restrictions on travel resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic, plus three national lockdowns, resulted in a massive shift from office based to home working, from physical, professional and social gatherings to virtual ones, and to unprecedented reliance on online shopping and entertainment services. Network usage within suburbs has increased dramatically as less people are travelling to town and city centres than during pre-pandemic times. Maintaining and enhancing the mobile networks is of vital national importance, and it was significant that telecoms was designated as “critical work” during that time. It is anticipated that the current shift towards homeworking and online services will persist, to a lesser degree, in the future. It is vital that the infrastructure is in place throughout the UK to meet this demand, and the needs of the public.

The benefit of having a strong and resilient network has been highlighted in the last 32 months following the sudden shift in the network requirements, as the demand on the network in residential areas increased with home-working and home-schooling. Research by Ofcom, Online Nation 2020 found that until early that year, online video calling was used much less than other online communication services, with 35% of online adults using online video calling at least weekly in the 12 months to February 2020. However, in May 2020, this had doubled to 71% of online adult consumers using online video calling services at least weekly, with 38% using them at least daily. Research suggests that 7% of adult internet-users used video calling for the first time as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The DCM and the RT Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP highlighted the need for telecommunications companies to support the NHS by providing the connectivity it needed during the Covid-19 pandemic, stating the following in April 2020:

*“Telecoms companies and their workers are making a major contribution to **keeping the nation connected during the COVID-19 emergency**, ensuring that people can stay and work from home”* (our emphasis).

In the current climate, with a dramatic shift towards home-working, online shopping and virtual social gatherings, the importance of connectivity for economic, social and physical wellbeing is

more apparent than ever before. Infrastructure needs to be in place in order for people to benefit from these services, and it needs to be located in or very close to the areas where the users are located.

The Ofcom Connected Nations 2020 UK Report outlined a sharp increase in both mobile and voice data, particularly during the enforced national lockdowns of 2020. The report states that average call volumes and average call duration increased in the week that national lockdown was introduced in March 2020, with mobile hotspots shifting away from city centres to the suburbs and residential areas as restrictions continued.

Significantly, the same report states that the consumption of mobile data saw a staggering rise of 42%, when compared with the previous year. Additionally, the traffic carried in England in June 2020 (during lockdown) exceeded that carried across the whole of the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) in February 2020 (prior to lockdown).

Research by Online Nation 2020 found in April 2020, internet users in the UK spent an average of 4 hours 2 minutes online each day, 37 minutes more each day per online adult compared with January 2020. This emphasises the importance of telecommunications infrastructure in being able to provide internet users with reliable network coverage and capacity to deal with an increasing amount of time online each day.

In his speech at Connected Britain 2020, in September 2020, Digital Infrastructure Minister, Matt Warman, stated the following:

“COVID has altered the way we live, work and, most importantly, stay connected with our family and friends. The digital infrastructure that keeps us all connected was essential to our 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”.

The implementation of a third national lockdown throughout January, February, March and April 2021 saw a return of most aspects of life associated with the two previous lockdowns, and the same increases in voice calls and mobile data consumption is expected. Mr Warman also stated the following:

“The world is in the middle of a digital revolution. COVID has accelerated this process, 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”.

Central Governments’ direction of travel is to support the roll-out of 5G technology and this was the case pre-pandemic. This has been emphasised by the Government’s relaxation of Permitted Development rights, allowing Operators to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of the general public and ever-increasing demand for mobile data consumption. Since its initial roll-out in 2019, Operators have continued to deploy 5G across the UK, largely via the upgrading of existing base stations. Around 12,000 base stations now carry 5G technology. Mr Warman also confirmed that legislative reforms were being undertaken to make it easier for Operators to deploy and upgrade telecommunications base stations.

In May 2021, Mr Warman also wrote to Local Authority Chief Executives in England, making it clear to Local Authority’s that they have a role to play in supporting improved connectivity, and also stating the following:

“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 UK and 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. Last year we agreed a £1 billion Shared Rural Network deal with the UK’s mobile network operators to extend 4G mobile geographical coverage to 95% of the UK by 2025” (emphasis added).

Notwithstanding the Covid-19 pandemic, and the increase in network reliance, a look at past data shows that our reliance on mobile networks was increasing year-on-year, prior to 2020. Ofcom’s Communications Market Report 2018 provides a figure of 92 million active mobile subscribers in the UK at the end of 2017. It detailed that 78% of adults used a smartphone and that 76% of mobile users were using their devices for web and data access. Figures within the report also confirm that users were spending an increasing amount of time per day using their mobile phone. 68% of participants in the Touchpoints research reported that they “*could not live without*” their mobile phone (rising to 78% among 25-34s). Whilst not included within the research figures, anecdotal evidence suggests that this number is greater still amongst those aged under 18. Given that two years have now passed since this report, it is anticipated that these figures have increased further. All of which points towards the nation’s increasing dependency on mobile services and connectivity.

A YouGov survey, in January 2021, adds further support to this, with 67% of those who were at the time working from home during the pandemic confirming that they had been using mobile data, as opposed the fixed-line broadband, agreeing that access to it would be an important factor when choosing where to live in the future. This rises to 76% for 18 to 34-year olds. The survey also confirmed that 44% of one network Operator’s data traffic in January 2021 went to streaming services, such as Disney+, and that 45% of 18 to 24 year olds confirming that they are more likely to use their mobile data for browsing social media.

All of the above occur in a domestic setting. There is a clear need and demand for connectivity and capacity, and it is anticipated that telecommunications infrastructure has become, and will continue to become, commonplace in residential and suburban settings, such as the application site.

As recognised by the London Assembly’s Regeneration Committee within its “*Digital Connectivity in London*” report, published June 2017, digital connectivity is now widely regarded as the “*fourth utility*’, *an everyday necessity alongside water, gas and electricity*” and also noted that “*mobile broadband is, and will continue to be, an essential complement of fixed broadband*”. It is no longer a luxury, but a service essential to modern life.

The installation of this proposal will enable 3G, 4G and 5G services for both Operators, plus the provision of the Emergency Services Network to this area of Rochdale. The fact that this installation will be 5G-ready at the point of the deployment will greatly improve the level, and quality, of network coverage to the surrounding area, placing it at the forefront of the latest technological advancement.

2G was the second generation of mobile phone transmission, it introduced data services for mobile, starting with SMS text messages.

3G was an extension to this and enabled the use of data. The main technological difference that distinguishes it from 2G technology is the use of packet-switching rather than circuit-switching for data transmission. Increased data rate to a minimum of 2 Mbit/s for stationary or walking users, and 384 Kbit/s in a moving vehicle.

Similarly, 4G was another extension and enabled an increased speed in connection. It supports a minimum data rate of 1 Gbit/s for stationary and 100 Mbit/s for mobile operation. In simple terms, the benefit to users is that 4G supports mixed data, voice, video and messaging traffic at significantly faster speeds than 3G. This results in ultra-fast internet browsing, video streaming, gaming, e-mail and downloads.

At a local level, this installation continues to allow for an increase in home working, by providing the opportunity to create a “virtual office”, reducing the need to travel for work as a consequence.

It is therefore very important for ‘mobile only’ households that live and work and any businesses that operate in this part of the LPA’s area, together with visitors and others who are staying in or travelling through the area, that the necessary indoor RF coverage is provided to enable them to have satisfactory mobile telephone and internet access.

On a wider scale, the proposal would continue to contribute towards the country’s connectivity and digital economy future via the provision of brand-new 5G network coverage for EE and Three UK. Mobile telecommunications are vital for the UK’s economic competitiveness and in promoting social inclusion, and, on a local scale, it is important to ensure the continuation of established telecommunications networks in this area.

Ofcom’s 2018 Communications Market Research Report shows that smartphones are owned by four of every five UK consumers and smart TVs are in almost half of all households. Demand for data continues to grow rapidly for UK consumers, with 1.9GB consumed by an average mobile subscription per month in 2017, (up from 1.3 GB the previous year). The report found that more than seven in ten now use their mobile to access the internet, sufficient coverage is obviously vital for this basic utilities service to be provided.

The UK Government, recognising the benefits to commerce, industry and the public in general, places great emphasis on the benefits of mobile telecommunications to modern life. This position was reinforced by a statement made by then Prime Minister David Cameron in March 2016 when he specifically addressed the vital importance of mobile connectivity for residents and local economies and highlighted that the urgent delivery of the required network improvements is a Government priority;

“Ten years ago, we were all rather guilty of leading campaigns against masts and all the rest of it. Our constituents now want internet and mobile phone coverage. We need to make sure that we change the law in all the ways necessary, that the wayleaves are granted, that the masts are built, that we increase coverage and that everyone is connected to the information superhighway. This is substantiated in the most recent budget announcement of 16th March 2016, which commits to provisions for “greater freedoms and flexibilities for the deployment of mobile infrastructure”.

Since 2016, and particularly during the enforced lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, public and business reliance on the established mobile networks has continued to increase. Improved

mobile coverage and connectivity is now no longer viewed as a 'luxury', but rather an every-day necessity. This has been further exacerbated as, at the time of writing, the country appears to be adopting a more hybrid-working pattern, split between traditional office working, and working from home. As this 'working from home' naturally occurs within a residential setting, then it follows that the necessary infrastructure and apparatus must be in place to allow this to happen. As such, this type of infrastructure must be deployed within all settings – be it sub-urban, urban and residential areas. It is imperative that existing and established network connectivity and capacity is continuous, with any removal of services needing to be addressed immediately and prior to the removal of the existing base station. This is what is proposed in this application, with an 18m monopole, as proposed in this instance, fully addressing any connectivity, capacity or coverage issues which may arise from the decommissioning of the current base station.





Alternative sites considered and not chosen

Site ³	Site Name and address	National Grid Reference	Reason for not choosing ⁴
GF	Fieldhouse Industrial Estate	E389750, N414833	The landlord has confirmed via email that the entire industrial estate is to be redeveloped for residential use, though planning has not yet been granted. As such, no viable, town planning and environmental solution, which is preferable to the application site, could be identified to accommodate the necessary ground-based apparatus.
SW	Binns Nook Road	E390145, N414786	This option sits at a far lower elevation than the application site (a circa 12m difference). As such, the level of achievable network coverage from this location is far less than the proposed development. Consequently, this option was discounted.
SW	Fieldhouse Road Streetworks	E389824, N414582	Following the Applicant's pre-application consultation exercise, and the feedback provided by the Local Planning Authority, this option was discounted as it was confirmed than an application at this location would not be supported by Officers.
SW	Junction of Fieldhouse Road & Joy Street	E389976, N414685	This option was discounted due to a lack of available space to accommodate the necessary ground based equipment, as well as the presence of underground services.

³ ETS – Existing Telecomm site, ES – Existing Structure, RT – Roof Top, GF – Greenfield, SW – Streetworks

⁴ SP - Site Provider, RD - Redevelopment Not Possible, T - Technical Difficulties, P – Planning
O – Other



**DALCOUR
MACLAREN**

GF	National Carpets	E390475, N414935	This option was discounted after the Radio Planning Team confirmed that the necessary network coverage could not be achieved from this location.
----	------------------	------------------	--



Additional relevant information

Given the nature of the site search – i.e. a very specific area of Rochdale, to the north of the Whitworth Road appeal site – there is a very restricted geographical area in which this base station can be deployed, to ensure that the necessary coverage footprint is serviced and replicated. The surrounding area is mainly residential, and, as such, is restricted in terms of opportunities to deploy the required base station.

As with any network planning, it is important to strategically position network cells sufficiently apart so that their coverage plots do not overlap (to any significant extent) and that the maximum coverage can be achieved from each separate base station. It is clear that the options within the local area are limited, with none of the alternative options considered to be preferable to the proposed development, in terms of either achievable network coverage or environmental impacts.

It is considered that the application site offers an appropriate environmental and town planning solution, whilst simultaneously ensuring the operational parameters of the installation are met. It is considered that there is no better option within the search area, hence the application which sits before the Council. It is considered that the proposal is appropriate to the surroundings and that there is no better alternative location available which will provide the necessary coverage to the local area.

It should also be noted at this juncture that there is no requirement for the Applicants to submit an alternative site assessment, nor for the Applicants to select the best town planning option as the application site (see page 15, above). The ‘principle of the development’ is established within The Order and, as such, no regard needs to be paid to the Council’s Development Plan. The Applicants’ do, however, consider that the application site which has been brought forward offers the best town planning and operational solution for the local area, with a specific requirement of replicating the established coverage footprint provided by the previous base station at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate.

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

Environmental Information:

There is no evidence of protected species at this location. The proposal will subsequently not have any potential negative impacts on any sensitive habitats or species.

Siting and Appearance:

It is considered that the proposal utilises the most suitable design available to meet the technical requirement within the very specific technical constraints. As discussed in Section 3 of this document, this site is required to replace the previous rooftop installation at the old mill building within the Fieldhouse Industrial Estate and is now due to be decommissioned.

Whilst this application is being brought forward as a ‘replacement’ cell to the one which is being decommissioned, the fact that it will be 5G-ready at the point of deployment is a significant point of note. This application is therefore not only a ‘replacement’ of the existing coverage, but will also lead to significant connectivity improvements with the availability of 5G coverage, as well as improved 2G, 3G and 4G network capacity for both EE and H3G (Three) within the local area.

The application site is not located within a designated area, and it is considered that the proposal will not bring about substantial harm to the character of the area but will bring benefit to the

public through retained and improved connectivity and communications services. While the applicants do not suggest that the proposal will have no impact, it is considered that when applying the balancing method advocated in the NPPF, the proposal finds itself in favour.

It is important to keep the impact of telecommunications development in the area to a minimum and it is considered that the proposed development achieves this, through good design and the deployment of a slimline monopole with 'stacked' antennas. When considering the benefits of the proposal, the public benefit from retained and improved connectivity and wireless communication services is a significant one. The Applicant's consider that any perceived visual impact on the area, or skyline, has been mitigated, as far as practicable, through the best design available within the technical constraints of the site, and that this development will provide excellent public benefits – both in the present, and in the future. It is considered that the impact of the development has therefore been reduced as far as practicable.

In this case, it is suggested that the application of the balancing method advocated in the NPPF, for the provision of communications and connectivity services, in the public interest, be utilised to balance the need for continued connectivity with the potential impact of the site. It is considered that when this balance test is applied to the proposal, where the need and significant public benefit is balanced against the appearance and level of associated visual impact of the proposed site, that the application proposal is positively in favour and is considered wholly appropriate.

This has been emphasised by the Planning Inspectorate on a number of appeal cases where, the Planning Inspectorate has ruled in favour of proposed developments of a similar nature, where this balance was applied. Some recent examples of where this balance was applied by the Planning Inspectorate include appeal cases referenced APP/Q3305/W/18/3206555 and APP/L1765/W/18/3197522. Extracts from these appeal decisions are included below for your convenience:

*"In considering the need for the proposal, Government policy, as set out in the Framework states that advanced, **high-quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. In this respect, I have found that there is a need for the proposal which therefore weighs strongly in its favour.** As I have found that the level of harm relating to this second main issue would be low, that identified need would outweigh the harm in this case"* (emphasis added).

*"I conclude on this issue that despite the less than substantial harm that would be caused, the **public benefits of the proposal would outweigh that harm**"* (emphasis added).

"9. The Government places a high priority on the provision of high-quality communications. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at Paragraph 112 states, "Advanced, high-quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections... The Council has commented that service provision would be 'adequate' without the proposal, but the appellant has an obligation to provide not only appropriate coverage but also capacity for the network. I attach significant weight to the public benefit arising from the continuation of local service provision" (emphasis added).

*“13. Having regard to all relevant considerations, including national planning policy and the potential availability of alternative sites, my findings are that **the proposal’s public benefit in maintaining and enhancing local telecommunication coverage and capacity would outweigh the limited harm** arising to the character and appearance of the area” (emphasis added).*

Whilst each application needs to be assessed on its own merits, the above appeals (along with a growing number of others, many of which are referenced in the preceding sections of this document) indicate a growing trend, based on national policy and guidance, to favour important utilities and infrastructure developments in the wider public interest when the potential harm is outweighed by the important and unavoidable public benefits they provide. Ensuring continued network connectivity, coverage and capacity, for two Mobile Network Operators, within the Council’s jurisdiction is considered a major public benefit.

The selected siting is considered wholly appropriate. The proposal has been designed specifically to achieve a balance between meeting the technical requirement and avoiding harm to the local streetscene and the surrounding area. The application site has been strategically positioned between Dewhirst Road and Syke Road, adjacent to a small connecting road between the two. This site was specifically selected to ensure that it sits as far away from residential properties as practicable. As outlined within this statement, a very specific geographical search area was created due to the imminent deployment of the allowed scheme at Whitworth Road. The second base station, which will work in tandem with the Whitworth Road site, must sit a suitable distance from Whitworth Road, and ensure that coverage footprints do not overlap, but rather complement each other and provide continued, and enhanced, network services to the surrounding areas.

The selection of a slimline monopole, rather than a lattice tower or a traditional shrouded monopole, has been brought forward to ensure that the size and scaling of the proposed installation is reduced as far as practicable.

The antennas cannot be screened for operational reasons as this would result in an attenuation of the signal and reduced network coverage. However, strategically positioning the proposed installation within dense, mature tree cover, it is considered that the least-impacting site has been brought forward as part of this application.

On balance, this proposed location is considered to be the optimum location in terms of siting and design, with the limited harm it may impose on the surrounding area being outweighed by the provision of continued and enhanced services to the area in the public interest. Given the social, economic and environmental benefits that will be brought forward as part of this proposal, in achieving continuous network coverage for the area, it is not considered that the perceived visual impact of this proposal would outweigh said benefits, and that Officer support should therefore be given. As such, equilibrium will be achieved between technical requirements and environmental impact.

Planning Policy Context:

National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework came into force in July 2018 replacing the guidance published in March 2012, was updated again in February 2019, and then had a further update in July 2021. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states *"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development"*, and in paragraph 10 that *"at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development"*. In order to achieve the sustainable development objective, the NPPF has identified 3 overarching objectives (paragraph 8):

"a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

For decision-taking (paragraph 11) this means:

"c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) 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:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."

Further to this, paragraph 38 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 brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area."*

The NPPF directly addresses the need for enhanced wireless communication services, first mentioned in paragraph 20, which states that an LPA's strategic policies must make sufficient provision for:

*“b) infrastructure for transport, **telecommunications** (our emphasis), security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)”*

Leading on from this, paragraph 114 states that “Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. **Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections**”. Again, the proposal is entirely consistent with the aims expressed within the NPPF.

Given that there appears to be no timeline as to when things may return to ‘normal’, in regard to the hybrid-working situation which was caused as a consequence of the global coronavirus pandemic, ensuring that improved network coverage is available to all communities is of paramount importance to the Operators, as well as Central Government. The proposed development at the application site, will ensure 3G, 4G and 5G network coverage is provided to the local area.

It should be noted that paragraph 120 states that “Local planning authorities must determine 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 guidelines for public exposure”. A certificate of compliance with ICNIRP guidelines is included within this application.

It is stated in Section 4 of this statement that the Planning Inspectorate has in recent years continually recognised the importance of connectivity. When applying the balancing exercise encouraged within the NPPF (specifically, Section 16), the Inspectorate has found in multiple cases that the provision, or prevention of loss, to existing services can outweigh less than substantial harm to heritage assets.

In determining one such appeal, brought by operator Telefónica (O2) against the decision of the London Borough of Harrow to refuse Prior Approval for the installation of a 12.5 metre high monopole with shrouded antenna section and accompanied by an equipment cabinet on a roadside verge in the urban area of Harrow-on-the-Hill (appeal reference APP/M5450/W/17/3180345, determined in December 2017), the Inspector concluded that:

*“The proposal would be permitted development and provide public benefits in extending the telecommunications capacity of the area. In applying the balancing test of paragraph 134 of the Framework, I consider that these **benefits outweigh the harm that would arise from the proposal’s impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area**” (emphasis added).*

These findings were echoed by the Inspectorate in determining a further case brought by the same Appellants against the decision of the London Borough of Hillingdon to refuse planning permission for a 15 metre high monopole with shrouded antenna section and associated equipment housing at a roadside location within the urban area of West Drayton (APP/R5510/W/16/3143922, 2016).

The Inspector concluded:

“The Framework sets out the importance of an advanced high-quality communications infrastructure for sustainable growth and makes specific reference

*to the development of high-speed broadband technology. **This is reflected in the London Plan and the public benefit arising from the improvement of the telecommunications infrastructure is a material planning consideration that weighs in favour of the proposal.***

*Taking account of all matters I have concluded that the **limited harm caused to the significance of the heritage asset (the CA) would be outweighed by the public benefit that would arise from improving the communications infrastructure**" (emphasis added).*

In both cases cited, the developments were new base station installations proposed within Conservation Areas and it was determined that they would give rise to a degree of harm to the heritage asset in question. Despite this, the importance of providing a quality communications infrastructure was recognised by the Inspectorate and awarded due weight in the determination of the cases brought. That weight was sufficient for both appeals to be successful, despite the recognised harm. In the case of this application, the same public benefit occurs, plus the deployment of apparatus with 5G capability, without the harm to any nearby designated areas.

Local Guidance:

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended requires planning applications and appeals to be determined having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations, and section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of Section 70, the current adopted development plan for Rochdale Borough Council, relevant to the proposal, includes:

- the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016);
- and the saved policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (Adopted June 2006).

Policy P1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016) states that high quality design will be required for **all** new developments.

Policy P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016) provides similar guidance, stating that all new development are expected to adhere to high standards of design.

It should be acknowledged at this juncture that as both Policy P1 and Policy P3 aim to be applicable to **all** development, they cannot therefore legitimately and accurately be applied to the development of telecommunications networks, and the infrastructure that is required to support them. There are considerable design constraints that dictate the size, scale and form of telecommunications base stations, especially dual-user monopoles. As such, it is submitted that the proposed development cannot be accurately assessed against a non-telecoms-specific Local Policy. These design constraints must be acknowledged.

However, it should be acknowledged by the Local Authority that the proposed apparatus only serves **one** function – to provide communication services and mobile network coverage to the local area. The monopole has **no** other function. As such, the design and appearance of the equipment, as well as the height of the equipment, is dictated purely by functionality and technical constraints. As outlined within this document, the proposed apparatus has been

specifically designed to accommodate two Operators, as was the case with the Whitworth Road scheme.

Only essential apparatus is proposed for deployment. It is therefore submitted that the proposed scheme does indeed meet the threshold for 'high quality design', as per Policies P1 and P3. The innovative design, with 'stacked' antennas, is also considered to satisfy this policy, with such apparatus already deployed within residential areas across the UK. It is considered that the design is both 'high quality' and wholly appropriate for such a setting.

Whilst the apparatus cannot be considered 'attractive', it can also not be considered as 'poorly designed'. It performs a particular function, the effectiveness and success of which is dictated by both height and scale, and, again, this must be acknowledged. Any development, at any location, will have some level of visual impact on the local area. The proposed development is solely designed to provide network coverage and services to the surrounding area – as such it follows that the visual impact of the scheme will be on the immediate area in which it sits. As outlined within this statement, the application site has been selected specifically to reduce any associated impact of the proposed infrastructure. Given that similar infrastructure has been deployed in close proximity to residential housing, it is considered that the surrounding utilitarian context of the industrial estate, in which the application site sits, offers the setting in which one would expect to view such apparatus.

The new, innovative monopole design allows the antennas to be 'stacked' and positioned within a linear structure, rather than a wider, shrouded headframe – as was typically the case with traditional telecommunications monopoles over the last two decades. This has allowed the traditional 'bubble' headframe monopoles to be dispensed with, and replaced within the streetscene by designs similar to the appeal scheme. This ensures that the 'shared' structure is the smallest, and thinnest, it can be, without compromising the operational efficiency of the base station. This relatively new design option is considered to be preferable, from an environmental and town planning perspective, to the traditional shrouded monopoles that were typically located adjacent to the public highway, or within suburban areas. The type of structure proposed as part of the appeal scheme is now common across the UK and must be acknowledged as 'high quality' design that was simply not available to the Appellant's 10 years ago.

The deployment of the telecommunications infrastructure to provide a very specific service is unavoidable, as without it, there can be no network. Therefore the assessment that must be undertaken is clear – do the public benefits of providing not only continued, but enhanced, network coverage, capacity and connectivity, for two established Mobile Network Operators within the local area, outweigh any visual impact that the proposed development may cause. The Applicants submit that, in this instance, the multiple social, economic, and environmental which will be brought forward as part of the proposed development, certainly outweigh any associated visual impact.

As per Policies P1 and P3, developments are **not** required to avoid any and all visual impact, but to ensure that high quality design is brought forward. Given that the Planning Inspectorate allowed the appeal scheme at Whitworth Road (Appeal Ref: APP/P4225/W/22/3310956) which proposed a similar 20m-high dual-user monopole, it is submitted that that structure passed the threshold for 'high quality' design. As such, the same consideration should be made when assessing whether the design of the proposed development also qualifies as 'high quality'. The Applicant's consider that it does, and, as such, consider that this proposal satisfies Policies P1 and P3.

Policy DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016) outlines the Council's expectations for '*General development requirements*'. In a similar fashion to Policy P1 and P3, of the same document, the Local Authority expect to see 'high quality design' for all development brought forward. The Applicants, as outlined above, consider that the proposed scheme is in full accordance with this requirement.

Policy DM1 is made up of 13 separate bullet points (a-m). It is submitted that points d, e, f, h, i, j, k, l, and m, are not relevant to the proposed development and should therefore form no part of the Local Authority's assessment of this application.

In terms of the remaining bullet points – a, b, c, and g – it is considered that the '*high quality design*', has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this statement. In terms of development proposals taking the opportunity to '*enhance the quality of the area*', it is submitted that this is wholly subjective. The Applicant's do, however, submit that the continued, and enhanced, network connectivity, capacity and coverage (via 5G), for two network Operators, to the surrounding area, **will** enhance the quality that area. Given that network services have been in situ since 2005, the continuation, and improvement, of these services is of paramount importance, especially given the public reliance on such networks. The Applicant's also submit that, were a replacement base station not to be deployed, then that would directly conflict point a) of DM1 – in that allowing such services to be removed, and not replaced, would have the opposite effect of "*enhancing the quality of the area*".

Bullet point b) of DM 1, states that development proposals must be compatible with surrounding land uses. It should be noted that the apparatus proposed as part of the proposed scheme is specifically designed for deployment in urban settings. The slimline, dual-user, monopole is of a standard design which is routinely rolled-out across similar settings in the UK. Were a telecommunications lattice tower to be proposed at the appeal site, then it could be suggested that such a development would not be compatible with the surrounding urban and residential land use. However, as a slimline monopole is proposed, this is considered to be exactly the type of street furniture which is expected in such a setting. As such, it is considered that there is no conflict with point b) of DM1.

Bullet point g) of DM1 relates to service provision. It is submitted that service provision is the one and only function of the appeal scheme, providing coverage, connectivity and capacity for two mobile network operators (EE and Three UK), for a variety of technologies (2G, 3G, 4G and brandnew 5G), as well as the future Emergency Services Network. This service provision is available to all local residents and businesses, and has been since circa 2005. As such, it is considered that the appeal scheme is in complete accordance with point g) of DM1.

The Council's policy is supportive of improvements in telecommunications networks and recognises the need to support business and domestic needs. This is particularly relevant when assessing the proposal before the Council, as with any replacement network cell there is a clearly defined target area that is currently receiving network coverage for two Operators. The previously enjoyed network coverage must be replicated, and improved upon, if possible, (in this instance, with a 5G-ready installation), or the result will be the creation of permanent 'coverage gaps' within the local area – where there were none previously. As this installation has provided network services for circa 19 years the removal, and non-replacement, of these services is likely to have a significant social and economic impact on the local community, especially at a time when our reliance on networks continues to increase, year-on-year.

It is considered that the proposal satisfies both points one and two above, with the application site being considered the most appropriate available, within a very specific search area. At 20m

in height, this monopole is considered wholly appropriate for the surrounding area, with 20m monopoles now seen as 'standard' within all settings, and commonplace within residential areas. As such, point four, above, is considered to be satisfied, as the smallest and slimmest 'shared' monopole is proposed as part of this development. This design is considered wholly appropriate for urban areas, especially those situated in close proximity to public highways, and within close proximity of residential properties.

The proposed installation will be shared by two major mobile Operators, as well as the Emergency Services Network (ESN), a point which is supported in both Local and National Planning Policy (satisfying point three above). This multi-user site will assist in keeping the number of ground-based masts in the area to a minimum, assisting in reducing mast proliferation within the Local Authority's jurisdiction.

As outlined in the Alternative Site Assessment, in Section 5 of this document, the application site is considered to be the best solution from both a technical perspective, as well as a town planning and environmental perspective. An ICNIRP certificate has been submitted alongside this application and the proposed colour of the equipment has been suggested as RAL7035 (Light Grey).

The application site is considered the most appropriate available, within a very specific search area. This location is considered to offer the best town planning, environmental and operational solution within the target area. It is submitted that an appropriate solution has been brought forward, with the public benefits of ensuring continuous network services within Rochdale, outweighing the disbenefits of the scheme.

As the 5G network roll-out is in its relative infancy, and as more sites are deployed, 20-metre high installations will soon replace existing 15 metre sites across the country – thereby becoming 'the new normal'. This is supported by the Government's relaxation of Permitted Development rights which have again been relaxed in early 2022 (after being previously relaxed in 2017), which shows a clear indication that 20m is now the accepted height for new base stations, both within and outwith planning designations.

This relaxation of these Permitted Development rights has been specifically undertaken to allow the smooth roll-out of 5G network services. It should be noted that, as a consequence of the new PD Rights, the ground-based equipment cabinets are outright Permitted Development.

No conflict has been identified with any other Development Plan policies.

Overall, it is considered the proposal complies with both national and local policy. In terms of national policy, it minimises the number of installations by sharing and would provide coverage for a wide range of technologies. It is of significance that the development ensures a continued and enhanced provision of local community facilities and services through the integration of a replacement base station into the Operators network, and shows a wide-ranging, long-term strategy for the local area.

Such long-term strategies are often requested by Local Authorities to enable them to understand how the network will be created within a particular Council jurisdiction. Should this application not be supported, the need to deploy an additional base station within the local area will still remain.

In order to address the 'coverage gap' which will be created when the existing installation at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate is removed, a new base station is required. It is considered that the

application site offers the best town planning and operational solution in which to achieve this. Should this application not be supported, the Applicants will then be directed to progressing with an alternative option which has already been assessed as a poorer town planning or operational solution.

Conclusion

In summary, the application is in respect of electronic communications apparatus necessary to replicate and enhance public infrastructure networks, following the imminent removal of the existing base station which services the local area. If no permanent solution can be integrated into the network then this area will find itself in a 'coverage gap', for the first time in circa 19 years. The proposed development will ensure that this service gap does not created.

This statement has demonstrated that the proposal is in accordance with local Development Plan policy and national policy set out in the NPPF. In particular, it is a form of development that is specifically encouraged as a matter of principle and in its detail complies with the policy objective of minimising potential environmental impact, being appropriately designed and located, as far as practicable.

The rooftop base station at Fieldhouse Industrial Estate provided 2G, 3G and 4G coverage for two Operators. The proposed apparatus will improve the level of 3G and 4G coverage provided to the local area, as well as providing brand-new 5G connectivity for the first time. This proposed development will also provide the Emergency Services Network (ESN) coverage for the Ambulance, Fire and Rescue, and Police Services. This is an important planning consideration and must be acknowledged by the Local Authority.

In conclusion, the application merits support and there are no material considerations that indicate otherwise.

Contact Details

Name (Agent)	Rebecca West	Telephone	N/A
Operators	MBNL (EE (UK) Ltd and H3G UK Limited)	Fax No	N/A
Address	Unit 10 – Bignell Park Barns Chesterton OX26 1TD	Email address	N/A
Signed	Rebecca West	Date	25 th January 2024

Position	Town Planner	Company	Dalcour Maclaren
For and on behalf of MBNL (EE (UK) Ltd and H3G (UK) Limited			

