

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

1. Site Details

Site Name:	Outside of St Thomas More Church	Site Address:	Footway of Kirkway, Middleton, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M24 1TR
National Grid Reference:	E: 387257 N: 404478		
Site Ref Number:	CS 13212324	Site Type: ¹	Macro

2. Pre Application Check List

Site Selection (for New Sites only)

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

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

Site Specific Pre-application consultation with local planning authority

Was there pre-application contact:	No
Date of pre-application contact:	N/A
Name of contact:	N/A

¹ Macro or Micro

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Registered Address:
Cornerstone Telecommunications, Infrastructure Limited,
Hive 2, 1530 Arlington Business Park, Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SA.
Registered in England & Wales No. 08087551.
VAT No. GB142 8555 06

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1530 Arlington Business Park,
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Summary of outcome/Main issues raised:

A pre-application consultation letter and copy of the proposal drawings were sent to the Chief Planning Officer at the Local Planning Authority by email on 22/05/2024.

No site specific comments have been received to date.

Annual area wide information to planning authority

Has annual area wide information been provided?	No
If no explain why:	
Summary issues raised: Cornerstones commercial relationship with Virgin Media O2 (VMO2) has changed, effectively increasing our independence to work with other companies in the deployment of mobile infrastructure. It means we no longer have visibility of VMO2 full update plan. However, Cornerstone is fully committed to working closely with Local Planning Authorities and following best practice guidance. We aim to engage and work with the planning department at the earliest opportunity from when we are instructed to deliver new infrastructure within your Local Authority area and often conduct strategic pre-rollout engagement meetings to discuss our wider rollout. If your Local Authority would like a meeting to discuss wider Cornerstone rollout plans then please advise. We recognise the importance of developing long term partnerships and will always work with you to deliver improved mobile connectivity. Accordingly we conducted a pre-rollout engagement meeting with Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council on 11/02/2013.	

Community Consultation

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model:	Red	Amber	Green
Outline of consultation carried out: A pre-application consultation letter and copy of the proposal drawings were sent to the local Councillors for the South Middleton (Councillors P Williams, P M Dale and J West), the local MP Chris Clarkson, by email on 22/05/2024. Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of relevant correspondence): No comments received to date			

School/College

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Location of site in relation to school/college (include name of school/college):
No schools located nearby
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 Defence or the operator of the civil safeguarding area or defence safeguarding area notification (only required for an application for prior approval)

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

Developer's Notice

Copy of Developer's Notice enclosed?	Yes
Date served:	Developer's notice, covering letter and site plans were sent to the councils highways department on 02/07/2024 via email. Notice and proof of delivery attached as part of this application. Developer's notice, covering letter and site plans were sent to Salford Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees on 02/07/2024 via recorded delivery and email. Notice and proof of delivery attached as part of this application.

3. Proposed Development

The proposed site:
Background

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

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

Cornerstone are in the process of progressing a suitable replacement site in this area of Middleton for a radio base station. As part of Cornerstone's continued network improvement program, there is a specific requirement for a replacement installation at this location to provide equivalent and improved 2G, 3G and 4G and new 5G coverage and capacity, ensuring that this area of Middleton maintains access to the latest technologies for VMO2 service provision.

The operator is currently located on the grassed verge of the Old Kirkway Service Station and is providing 2G, 3G and 4G service provision to the surrounding area. However, the landlord has served a notice to quit to reduce the site area demise. This means that VMO2 and Vodafone are no longer able to share the same pole or area due to the lack of space. Thus, a replacement site is urgently needed to ensure continuity of service provision in this area of Middleton ensuring customers are able to continue to utilise their handheld devices for the purposes in which they are accustomed to.

The site is for replacement coverage for the existing installation at Old Kirkway Service Station as shown below at Image 1 and 2.

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Image 1: Aerial view of existing site



Image 2: Streetview of existing site on Kirkway

As such, the operator needs to find a replacement site to ensure the latest technologies including future 5G can be provided in this area of Middleton, this streetwork site on the footway of Kirkway has been identified.

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The proposed radio base station is located on the footway of Kirkway, outside of St Thomas More Church Hall. The area is mixed use in nature with the site being located as far away as possible from the dense residential nature of the area. To the north of the site continues Kirkway with St Thomas More Roman Catholic Church and the junction of Mainway further north. To the north east is a small parade of shops with a public car park. To the east of the site is a slip road off Kirkway, leading to private garages and the rear of the parade of the shops. South of the site continues Kirkway, with Alkington Health Centre and the entrance to the associated car park. Further south are residential properties, however the semi-mature trees and the separation distance provide a screen for the proposed site. To the west of the site is St Thomas More Church Hall which forms a backdrop for the site in which the site will be viewed against.

The site is required to replace the existing greenfield installation at Old Kirkway Service Station. However, the landlord has served a notice to quit to reduce the site area demise. This means that VMO2 and Vodafone are no longer able to share the same pole or area due to the lack. Therefore, the operator needs to find a replacement site so its users do not face a hole in coverage in this area. The application site is needed to maintain and enhance 2G, 3G and 4G, as well as new 5G coverage and capacity for VMO2 to ensure that its customers continue to experience access to the latest service provision currently available with the loss of the existing site at Old Kirkway Service Station. The replacement installation will also meet the extra demands on the network in this area as new technologies improve increasing the demand for 4G and 5G technology.

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

The main instigator for a new installation in this location follows the operator requirement to remove their equipment from Old Kirkway Service Station after a valid notice to quit was served on the operator by the landlord. The existing greenfield installation has to have its site demise area reduced and a new site is required to provide the latest coverage and capacity to the Middleton area. This permanent installation is required to pick up the loss of network capacity associated with the NTQ.

The 3G and 4G provision allows internet access, video calling, data downstreaming, accessing social media networks and emailing to name just a few of the benefits. Therefore, to maintain high quality indoor 3G and 4G services in to this area would promote activity in line with the general population demand as the ownership of smart devices increases. The 3G and 4G provision allows internet access, video calling, data downstreaming, accessing social media networks and emailing to name just a few of the benefits. Therefore, to maintain high quality indoor 3G and 4G services in to this area would promote activity in line with the general population demand as the ownership of smart devices increases. 5G will deliver unparalleled speeds and capacity, with significantly reduced latency, which will be needed to deliver numerous innovative applications from autonomous cars to Internet of Things.

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

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Description:	
The proposed works comprise the installation of a 20m monopole supporting 6 no. antennas, 2 no. transmission dishes, 2 no. equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto including 3 no. Ericsson Radio Systems (ERS's).	
Overall Height: 20m	
Height of existing building (where applicable):	N/A
Equipment Housing: York	
Length:	0.6 Metres
Width:	1.9 Metres
Height:	1.75 Metres
Equipment Housing: Shire	
Length:	0.6 Metres
Width:	1.9 Metres
Height:	1.75 Metres
Materials (as applicable):	
Tower/mast etc – type of material and external colour:	Steel – RAL 7035 – Light Grey
Equipment housing – type of material and external colour:	Steel – RAL 7035 – Light Grey

Reasons for choice of design, making reference to pre-application responses:
One of the main thrusts of 'Supporting High Quality Infrastructure' in the NPPF is a reduction in the proliferation of telecommunications sites. The guidance states operators "should aim to keep the numbers of radio and telecommunications masts and the sites for such installations to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network. Existing masts, buildings and other structures should be used, unless the need for a new site has been justified. Where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate". We confirm that the applicant has adopted a sequential approach to site selection, however no existing base stations or structures were suitable, available and deliverable as detailed in Section 5. The design of the proposed equipment is considered to be the least visually intrusive option available given the level of equipment required for 5G (see additional supporting statement–5G Explanatory Note). The design of any communications infrastructure is dictated primarily by operational requirements and secondly by the development's setting. From an operational perspective, the operators must ensure the following when devising a final design solution for any site: • antennas are specifically orientated to transmit effectively and efficiently without signal being impeded; • dish links (if required) achieve a direct line of site connection with other base station sites within the network; and • GPS modules achieve a direct satellite link

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To achieve this the operator undertakes panoramic assessment to determine what is the minimum height for transmission equipment to be located in a context of local topography and clutter, such as manmade or natural features, and in all cases the operator is committed to limiting the size and amount of apparatus to an operational minimum.

The existing radio base station has been in situ at Old Kirkway Service Station for a number of years and has become an established part of the streetscene and currently provides services for the operator VMO2. The existing site cannot be upgraded for both and a replacement must be found.

The operator has carefully considered the design of the new proposed column. The operator is proposing the most sensitive design currently available to provide the necessary coverage and capacity to the surrounding area. Due to all the technologies that will be available at this location 3G, 4G and 5G, 6 antennas need to be installed at the top of the slim-line monopole. These are split into a dual stack formation where 3 antennas will be located at the top and the other 3 will be located underneath. The 3 upper antennas will provide new 5G service provision. The 3 lower antennas will provide 3G and 4G technology for the operator to the surrounding area. This makes the lower set of antennas 3.35m lower than the top of the pole. Thus if the column were to be any lower, the antennas would not be able to clear the buildings, trees and urban clutter and as such would not be able to operate effectively.

The proposed height at 20m is essential in order to provide coverage to the target coverage area. 5G new radio technologies operate in higher frequency bands than older technologies. Since it operates at higher frequencies where attenuation of the radio signal is naturally higher and the effects of clutter are greater it will normally require a higher structure to achieve the same coverage footprint. To increase capacity and data speeds to the user, the antenna will normally need to be mounted higher than conventional antennae. These factors drive a requirement for an increase in antenna height in 5G.

The new antennas are all unshrouded for technical reasons. However, they have been designed to be as tight as possible and virtually the same width as the main column, to minimise their visual appearance. The higher the radio frequency the more signal attenuation there is. The higher frequency 5G antennas are unable to operate effectively through the Glass Reinforced Plastic that the shroud is made up of and as such if these antennas were to be shielded then they would not be able to provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. An additional installation would be needed elsewhere within the cell area, leading to the proliferation of masts.

This is the slimmest design possible which will enable all the multi technologies to be supported from this site. If the column and shroud width were to be any slimmer then the technology would not fit in the one column and another radio base station would be required, which would lead to the proliferation of masts contrary to national Government guidance set out in the NPPF and The Code of Practice. Similarly, if the column were to be a uniform width

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throughout then the overall width would have to increase which would appear more visually prominent in the streetscene, than the proposed design.

The proposed design is more visually sensitive and much easier to assimilate into a streetscene than lattice towers or more traditional monopoles with bulky headframes. These non-stealth designs are preferred by operators as they are structurally capable of hosting more equipment and give greater scope for antenna orientation and are thus more efficient structures. However, such designs would appear alien in this location. Therefore, the operator has compromised on obtaining maximum coverage in order to better assimilate in to the streetscene.

The design of the column resembles as closely as possible to other vertical structures within the immediate area such as lightning columns, telegraph poles, another operators monopole, belisha beacons, bollards and road signage. These vertical structures will help the proposed installation of this radio base station assimilate with the surrounding area.

The design of the column is a simple, functional, vertical structure which will not appear incongruous within the streetscene. The presence of other linear urban structures such as lighting columns, belisha beacons, another operators monopole and road signage will assist with assimilation in the streetscene. The column is proposed to be coloured light grey to blend in with the foliage and trees; however the column can be coloured any other colour the LPA consider appropriate.

The transmission dishes are required in order to provide a link into the network. A clear line of sight is required in order for the site to meet its design brief. As such, a centre line height of 14.75m. If the proposed mast were to be any lower in height, or if the dishes were to be located any lower on the proposed mast, they would not be able to achieve a clear line of sight to other dishes in the network over the tall buildings in the area, which would fail the technical brief for the operator.

The equipment cabinets are small for telecommunications apparatus and proposed to be coloured light grey to match other equipment cabinets often found in urban areas. They have been positioned at the alongside the proposed monopole to minimise their appearance.

It is therefore considered that the proposal before you strikes a good balance between environmental impact and operational considerations. The proposed height and design represents the best compromise between the visual impact of the proposal on the surrounding area and meeting the operator's technical requirements for the site. Taking all matters into account it is considered that this proposal, to provide the latest 3G and 4G service provision and new 5G coverage providing high quality dense coverage and capacity, would not appear out of place within the streetscene.

Health and Safety - including ICNIRP compliance

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection public compliance is determined by mathematical calculation and implemented by careful location of antennas,

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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, VMO2 operate their networks in such a way the radio frequency power outputs are kept to the lowest levels commensurate with effective service provision.

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

All operators of radio transmitters are under a legal obligation to operate those transmitters in accordance with the conditions of their licence. Operation of 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.

4. Technical Justification

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

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

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

The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should not question the need for the telecommunications system, which the proposed development is to support. However, for the avoidance of doubt as set out below the proposed installation

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is needed for VMO2, via Cornerstone to replace existing 3G/4G coverage and capacity whilst also providing new 5G services to this site to the Middleton area.

The operator has chosen this site as it is the nearest suitable site to the existing site at Old Kirkway Service Station. In order to provide equivalent replacement coverage, the replacement site needs to be as close as possible to the existing site, so it can fill the specific hole in coverage in the operator's network. The area within which an installation needs to be established in order to meet the coverage requirement is constrained by the location and extent of the coverage provided by existing installations in the surrounding area. When the existing site will result in a substantial deficiency in good quality indoor coverage. Without a replacement the numerous businesses, visitors, residents who rely on existing services will experience dropped calls and slow internet access will. This will obviously have ongoing detrimental social and economic impacts for the community and is contrary to the NPPF. Reliable connectivity is essential given the location in a mixed use area, with commercial and residential properties in the area.

Coverage maps are a useful tool for establishing network coverage in an area. They are developed using assumptions regarding the handset use, expected level of call reliability and signal loss within a vehicle or a building. However, plots only tell part of the story as even when the coverage plots provided show good coverage in an area there may still be a requirement to improve capacity and as such local network services. Coverage plots show coverage issues only; they cannot show capacity issues. Coverage plot can be provided if required by the LPA.

The term 'capacity' refers to the fact that each base station can only provide services to a certain number of users at any one time. When this 'Capacity' is exceeded, although 'Coverage' remains present, the base station cannot provide service to any further users and calls/text/data usage would be unavailable. This is contrary to the purposes in which the operator's customers purchased their handheld devices as well as the Government's latest thinking that everyone should have access to the information superhighway wherever they are. Capacity is the maximum data or calls that can be processed by a base station.

Therefore, without this replacement installation, the area would continue be detrimentally affected as they continue to try to serve a much larger demand. The result would be constant buffering and dropped calls to the surrounding area, to the detriment of locals, businesses, students and visitors to the area. Therefore, coverage is worse than the plots can predict.

Further detail regarding the general operation of the network can be found in the accompanying document entitled 'General Background Information for Telecommunications Development'. In addition, fact sheets on Radio Planning and Propagation and 5G services have been attached to this application for reference. This information is provided to assist the local authority in understanding any technical constraints on the location of the proposed development.

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There is a specific requirement for a replacement radio base station at this location following the planned removal of the existing site to allow VMO2 to provide replacement mobile digital connectivity to the Middleton region whilst also providing new 5G services.

5. Site Selection Process

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

Site Type	Site name and address	National Grid Reference	Reason for not choosing site
Existing Telecom Site	Kirkway Service Station, Kirkway, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M24 1LW	E: 387332 N: 404531	The site provider has served a notice to quit on the existing telecoms site due to ongoing residential redevelopment works. LPA ref: 22/00278/FUL approved on 24/05/22. The site demise area has to be decreased to accommodate the new houses. Once this is complete, there will not be enough space for both operators to utilise the same pole or demise.
Rooftop	Alkrington Health Centre, Hardfield Road, Alkrington, Greater Manchester, M24 1PQ	E: 387236 N: 404461	The design of the building does not lend itself to being able to support telecommunications equipment. The roof is pitched. This means that there is nothing for the apparatus to attach to. The antennas would slide off taking the batons with them. The antennas would not be able to be directed to the target coverage area. The windows would prevent antennas from being pole mounted and there is not sufficient wall height to support the length of pole required to clear the rooftop to avoid antenna clipping and ICNIRP requirements.
Greenfield	Alkrington Community Centre, Hardfield Road, Alkrington, Greater Manchester, M24 1TQ	E: 387188 N: 404440	There is insufficient space in the grounds of the community centre to install a ground based radio base station without detrimentally

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			impacting the activities of the community centre. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for these reasons.
Streetworks	Footway of Mainway, Mainway, Alkrington, Greater Manchester, M24 1LL	E: 387240 N: 404528	An installation at this location is would be directly in front of residential frontages and have a greater visual impact in the streetscene due to the monopole facing the house. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetworks	Footway and grassed verge of Mainway, M24 1LL	Various	A site in this location would be directly in front of residential frontages and would have a greater visual impact than the proposed site location. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Rooftop	Rooftops of Mainway, M24 1LL	Various	These properties all have pitched roofs which are not suitable to support telecommunications apparatus as there is nothing to attach the equipment to. The weight of the equipment would mean that it would slide off the roof taking the batons with them and leading to the buildings demise. The antennas would also not be able to be directed to the target coverage area and as such would fail the design brief. The buildings are also too low to provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for these reasons.
Greenfield	Kirkway Car Park, Kirkway, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1TR	E: 387273 N: 404549	A site in this location would not provide sufficient separation between the two sites. This is an operational requirement to ensure there is no interference between the two operators. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetworks	Jct between Mainway and Kirkway, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1LL	E: 387254 N: 404565	A site in this location would not provide sufficient separation between the two sites. This is an operational requirement to ensure there is no

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			interference between the two operators. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Rooftop	Rooftops above the commercial units on Kirkway	Various	These properties all have pitched roofs which are not suitable to support telecommunications apparatus as there is nothing to attach the equipment to. The weight of the equipment would mean that it would slide off the roof taking the batons with them and leading to the buildings demise. The antennas would also not be able to be directed to the target coverage area and as such would fail the design brief. The buildings are also too low to provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for these reasons.
Greenfield	Alkrington Primary, Manor Road, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1JZ	E: 387210 N: 404708	A site in this location would back directly onto residential properties and would have a greater visual impact than the proposed site. A larger monopole or lattice tower would be utilised rather than the slimline streetwork monopole to maximise coverage.
Rooftop	Alkrington Primary, Manor Road, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1JZ	E: 387130 N: 404800	The design of the building does not lend itself to being able to support telecommunications equipment. The roof is pitched. This means that there is nothing for the apparatus to attach to. The antennas would slide off taking the batons with them. The antennas would not be able to be directed to the target coverage area. The windows would prevent antennas from being pole mounted and there is not sufficient wall height to support the length of pole required to clear the rooftop to avoid antenna clipping and ICNIRP requirements.
Existing Telecoms site	Kirkway, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1LW	E: 387275 N: 404553	In order for both operators to share this monopole a significant re-design would be required in order to host

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			both operators heavy 5G antennas. This would be a lot more prominent and visually intrusive than the slimline monopole proposed.
Rooftop	Thornberries public house, Kirkway, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1EP	E: 387288 N: 404605	The design of the building does not lend itself to being able to support telecommunications equipment. The roof is pitched. This means that there is nothing for the apparatus to attach to. The antennas would slide off taking the batons with them. The antennas would not be able to be directed to the target coverage area. The windows would prevent antennas from being pole mounted and there is not sufficient wall height to support the length of pole required to clear the rooftop to avoid antenna clipping and ICNIRP requirements.
Greenfield	Cheltenham Road, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1HG	E: 387333 N: 404726	An installation at this location is considered to be surrounded by residential properties in the streetscene and other alternatives exist which are more appropriate in order to deliver the required coverage to the target area. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetwork	Kingsway, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1LQ	E: 387420 N: 404904	An installation at this location is considered to be surrounded by residential properties in the streetscene and other alternatives exist which are more appropriate in order to deliver the required coverage to the target area. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetwork	Jct between Ledbury Close & Gloucester Road, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1HH	E: 387493 N: 404756	The footway at this location is too narrow to accommodate the operator's equipment. As such, it would lead to highway safety issues. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetwork	Boardman Fold Road, Middleton, Rochdale,	E: 387306 N: 404372	A site in this location would not be able to be built because there are a number of underground services in

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	Greater Manchester, M24 1PR		the way of installing a radio base station in this location including water and communications.
Rooftop	Alkrington Library, 193 Kirkway, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1LW	E: 387324 N: 404589	The building is too low to provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetwork	The Downs, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1TJ	E: 387789 N: 404448	An installation at this location is considered to be surrounded by residential properties and other alternatives exist which are more appropriate in order to deliver the required coverage to the target area. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Streetworks	Upton Close, Middleton, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, England, M24 1PG	E: 387382 N: 404373	The footway at this location is too narrow to accommodate the operator's equipment. As such, it would lead to highway safety issues. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Rooftop	St Thomas More, Kirkway, Middleton, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, M24 1TR	E: 387238 N: 404505	The building is too low to provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for this reason.
Greenfield	Kirkway, Middleton, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, England, M24 1LW	E: 387354 N: 404509	A mast at this location would not provide the required level of coverage to the target area due the substantial tree cover that would inhibit the signal and would not deliver the required coverage to the target area. This site has therefore been discounted for this reason.

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Map 1: Discount map and search area

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

N/A

Land use planning designations:

No land designations identified

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

National Planning Guidance

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

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

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

The governments National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 24 July 2018 and updates the 2012 version. In February 2019 the NPPF was revised again, with minor alterations to wording relating to housing supply and not any parts relating to telecommunications. The NPPF was updated in July 2021, in order to strengthen sections

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including requirements on improved design quality, a new requirement for Councils to produce local design codes or guides, an emphasis on using trees in new developments, revised policies on plan-making, removing statues and opting out of PD rights relating to residential conversions. The NPPF has been recently revised again in December 2023 with an update on policy on planning for onshore wind development in England and does not affect any parts relating to telecommunications.

The Government's latest thinking continues to strongly support communications infrastructure. The NPPF remains very supportive of high quality communications. Indeed, a whole chapter is dedicated to high quality communications, emphasising the importance that the Government attaches to digital connectivity. Paragraph 118 states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. This wording echoes guidance set out in paragraph 42 of the 2012 version of NPPF. However, it also includes the importance of *reliable* communications infrastructure for both economic growth *and social well-being*.

The NPPF continues to support the expansion of electronic communications networks at paragraph 118. It notes that policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time. The economic and social benefits of providing high quality and reliable communications infrastructure are well documented and can be found later in this Supporting Information Statement.

The NPPF makes reference to 5G:

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

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

Paragraph 119 of the NPPF retains the requirement to minimise the number of installations consistent with the efficient operation of the network but also includes being consistent with the needs of consumers and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion.

Paragraph 122 of the NPPF retains the guidance set out in paragraph 46 of the 2012 NPPF version which relates to determining applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure.

At the heart of the NPPF is the retained presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11). For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay or where there are no relevant development

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plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless the application of policies within the revised Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the revised Framework taken as a whole.

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

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

The NPPF builds on the aspiration to build a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 81 states:

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

Footnote 42 of the NPPF states:

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

Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development in England (March 2022)

The Code of Practice provides guidance to Code Operators (referred to as 'operators' throughout the Code of Practice), including the Mobile Network Operators and wireless infrastructure providers, their agents and contractors, local planning authorities, and all other relevant stakeholders in England on how to carry out their roles and responsibilities when installing wireless network infrastructure. It is also a useful tool for other interested stakeholders such as community groups, amenity bodies and individuals with an interest in mobile connectivity.

The aim of the Code of Practice is to support the government's objective of delivering high quality wireless infrastructure whilst balancing these needs with environmental considerations.

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It also has an important role in making sure that appropriate engagement takes place with local communities and other interested parties.

The Code of Practice covers all forms of wireless infrastructure development, including mobile masts and cabinets. It is recommended that other wireless communications operators follow the principles of this Code of Practice, where appropriate.

Unlike previous iterations this Code of Practice has been led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and developed in collaboration with representatives of the mobile network industry, other government departments and public bodies, local planning authorities, and protected landscapes. This document replaces the previous Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development, which was published in 2016 and is now published by DCMS.

The CoP sets out the legal and policy framework for the delivery of wireless infrastructure development.

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

The Government recognises the role of Planning in delivering the digital infrastructure that we need, in a sustainable and well-designed way, especially as households and businesses become increasingly reliant on mobile connectivity.

Paragraph 13 of the Code continues to echo the NPPF guidance in strongly supporting high quality communications infrastructure, which is seen as essential for sustainable economic growth. More specifically that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technologies (such as 5G) in order to support economic growth across the country.

The CoP sets out 'How wireless networks function.

Para. 16 states *"Cellular wireless networks use base stations to provide an area of radio coverage. Wireless technology uses the radio spectrum to broadcast radio waves between base stations and devices. Different radio frequencies have different characteristics which, along with the density of cell site locations, affect the extent of coverage and how much data can be carried over the network. Depending on the radio frequencies used, base stations can deliver coverage over a wide area or provide extra network capacity in areas where there is a high demand for network bandwidth"*.

Para. 17 sets out that *"Wireless technology continues to evolve rapidly, and mobile devices are now capable of much more. Second generation (2G) technology gave us voice calls*

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and text messages, 3G led to the launch of smartphones, and 4G, which enabled faster browsing, allowed us to do things like watching videos on the move. 5G, the latest generation of wireless technology, is much faster than previous generations of wireless technology and can offer greater capacity and lower latency, allowing thousands of devices in a small area to be connected at the same time. 5G networks, and future mobile generations, will be vital for a range of Internet of Things uses (IoT) and Smart City applications”.

The CoP establishes ‘Principles and commitments’ by which operators should develop their networks and that Local Planning Authorities should demonstrate their support by.

Para. 18 states “Operators should develop their networks and install wireless infrastructure according to the following principles and commitments:

- **Site sharing and use of existing infrastructure:** make use of existing structures, sites and masts wherever possible to reduce the need for new development. The NPPF states that, [when installing mobile infrastructure](#), the number of masts and sites should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion.
- **Consultation with local planning authorities, local communities and other stakeholders:** participate in dialogue with local planning authorities, along with other relevant stakeholders such as the highways authorities, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies, Historic England, and Natural England, including pre-application discussions, where appropriate. Maintain clear procedures, and high quality communication and consultation with local communities and other interested parties. Operators should agree community engagement with local planning authorities and share information as appropriate (see [Pre-application consultation with local communities](#) below).
- **Standardised and high-quality approach to planning applications, and the notification procedure:** provide standardised supporting documentation for planning applications (where appropriate) within the context of national and local requirements. Ensure planning submissions are of high-quality and provide the necessary evidence to support the application (as per the NPPF).
- **Prompt responses to enquiries:** respond to complaints and enquiries within a timely manner (see Review and Enquiries section below).
- **Siting and Design:** wireless infrastructure should be deployed in accordance with the guidance set out within this Code of Practice. Where appropriate, equipment should comply with the principles set out in the NPPF and consider any local planning policies, including any local and national design codes. When located in protected landscapes and other designated land, the sensitive nature of these areas must be considered.
- **Removal of redundant equipment and site restoration:** ensure that when infrastructure is upgraded, any equipment that is made redundant by the upgrade, such as brackets, is removed to benefit the local environment. Where a whole site is no longer in use, the site should be restored to its original state.

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- **Compliance with guidance laid out in the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) public exposure levels guidance:** as required by spectrum licences, comply with international guidelines for limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF) - including, as set out in the NPPF, providing a statement that self-certifies that ICNIRP guidelines will be met with all applications (see [Annex C](#)).

Paragraph 19 states that Local Planning Authorities should demonstrate their support by:

- **“Incentivising connectivity:** support the expansion of telecommunications networks and take a ‘joined-up’ approach to the wireless infrastructure planning process, including ensuring that Local Plans effectively support the deployment of digital infrastructure.
- **Facilitating sites:** engage with operators when new sites have been proposed and discuss site requirements.
- **Engagement with operators:** respond positively to requests for engagement and make decisions in line with national policy and Local Plans. For planning applications, find solutions to issues and ensure timely decisions are made.
- **Information and communication:** ensure that members of the public can access information about any development proposals within their local area. Send communications promptly to an appropriate operator contact (or their representatives)”.

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

Siting and Design Principles

The government's objective is to deliver high quality, reliable wireless infrastructure whilst ensuring the impact of new network development is kept to a minimum. The siting and design of wireless network infrastructure is central to achieving this. The CoP acknowledges that ‘good siting and design principles should apply to all wireless network development and take into account any site specific considerations and context. Both can create better places in which to live and work and help make development acceptable to communities’.

The Code provides guidance on siting and appearance principles. It sets out several design principles in respect of telecommunications development and acknowledges that the options for design used by an operator will be affected by site conditions including requirements to link the site to the network, landscape features and coverage and capacity requirements. The guidance includes at Para. 22 ‘the choice over the site selection and design of equipment is primarily dependent upon the coverage and capacity requirements and technical constraints of a specific location, although operators should make efforts to reduce visual impacts where possible’.

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Para. 23 confirms that there should be a **'presumption in favour of facilitating sustainable network development'** and, as such, operators and local planning authorities, as well as all other bodies involved in the deployment process, should work together to ensure connectivity needs are met and find viable solutions to deployment issues (emphasis added).

Paragraphs 24 - 27 sets out general siting and site selection principles which Operators should consider. The CoP acknowledges at Para. 24 that *'Operators use a range of sophisticated, computer-based planning tools to predict levels of signal strength and coverage from sites for 2G, 3G, 4G and now 5G. Once an operator has identified a requirement for a new cell site, a suitable site needs to be found. Elements that make a site favourable include: having existing or ready access to a power supply, access to fibre optic cables, vehicular access, and, other buildings and development which may provide a level of existing screening. Operators will typically look to upgrade existing infrastructure prior to considering a new deployment, in particular for initial 5G deployment'*.

Para 25 notes that *'When selecting sites for mobile infrastructure, operators should examine local plans and designations for the area, as well as carrying out an in-person site search to identify potential options which meet their requirements. Operators should follow these general siting and site selection principles:*

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

Para. 26 highlights that the installation of all wireless infrastructure requires a balanced approach between the technical needs and constraints of the proposed site and the potential impact of the development. The three key technical and operational considerations for installation sites are:

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

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Para 27 requires that Local Planning Authorities consider these issues and consider the need for a site within a limited search area alongside the public benefit of improved connectivity. Para. 27 further considers that in general, it should not, therefore, be appropriate for planning authorities to seek wider evidence of alternative sites (beyond that required by the NPPF), unless they consider the proposed development is unacceptable having regard to the relevant material planning considerations

In respect of 'Design', the CoP at Para 28 acknowledges that the siting of wireless infrastructure will influence which design options are most appropriate for reducing the visual impact including

- **Protecting visual amenity**
- **Mitigating visual impacts**

Para. 29 acknowledges that these factors along with location and the coverage and capacity requirements can influence the type of infrastructure structure that is deployed and requires that *'planning authorities should be aware of these constraints when considering proposals. In particular:*

- *In urban areas, where there is a high level of demand for mobile data, mobile base stations are likely to need to be deployed more densely. In these settings you can expect to see more use of streetwork monopoles and rooftop installations and, in future, we are likely to see a larger number of smaller units (so-called "small cells") deployed on buildings and on street furniture.*
- *In rural areas, base stations often need to cover wider geographic areas. Operators may need to use tall masts or lattice towers to provide the required coverage. The location of masts can sometimes be dictated by access to transmission links back to the operator's main network and proximity to a power supply. Coverage in some areas can be limited because of the geography, topography and terrain'.*

The CoP establishes radio equipment housing (cabinets) principles. The CoP at Para. 30 states that *"cabinets protect radio transmitters and receivers, provide the power source for mobile equipment, and are connected to antennas via cables. Equipment cabinets are likely to be needed at most sites. The cabinets must be of sufficient size to facilitate hosting various operating equipment whilst also allowing air circulation to reduce the potential for overheating"*. The CoP establishes the planning and visual considerations for siting radio housing. These include:

- Colouring
- Siting on highways and footways:
- Highway safety:
- Listed buildings/ scheduled monuments and Conservation Areas:

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- Access
- Trees

Local Policy

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

The statutory development plan as defined by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for Rochdale MBC currently comprises the:

- Rochdale Core Strategy (October 2016)

Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016)

The Spatial Vision for Rochdale is to (inter-alia):

'Our Spatial Vision for Rochdale borough in 2028 To become a prosperous borough: to grow our economy and develop our place through cooperation and partnership, improving the lives of local people'.

In order to deliver their Vision for the borough in 2028 the Council have identified five Strategic. Objectives that they need to, and want to, achieve. The objectives, if we are to achieve a more sustainable borough with a better quality of life for residents, include:

- SO1 - To deliver a more prosperous economy
- SO3 - To improve design, image and quality of place

The Core Strategy is centred around delivering and supporting sustainable development. Sustainable development should deliver economic, social and environmental objectives in an integrated and balanced way. This approach maximises the extent to which these objectives can all be achieved, rather than delivering some at the expense of others.

Policy SD1 relates to 'Delivering Sustainable Development' and states:

'When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted'.

Policy SP1 relates to Rochdale borough's role in the city region SP1. Rochdale borough's role in the city region Rochdale Borough will contribute to the success of the Manchester city region and the North West by playing its part in the delivery of sustainable development and investment that meets national and sub regional objectives for housing and employment growth. To do this the Council will promote the borough as an attractive location in terms of jobs, housing, shopping, the environment, image, tourism and quality of life and focus employment development so that it supports the overall economic growth of the sub region.

General development requirements are set out under policy DM1. The policy requires that all development must take account of all the relevant policies within the Local Plan. However, there are a number of basic planning considerations that apply to all development:

All development proposals, including changes of use of land and buildings, extensions and alterations, will be expected to demonstrate that they (inter-alia):

- a) Are of high-quality design and take the opportunity to enhance the quality of the area;
- b) Are compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents / users;
- c) Do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy;
- d) Mitigate against any impacts due to noise, air, dust, light and odour pollution, traffic generation or inadequate access, where such mitigation is identified as being necessary;
- e) Provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account of the proposed use and location;
- f) Do not have an adverse impact on health, through its impact or the effect of existing problems e.g. land contamination, or poor air quality'.

Neither the Core Strategy or the saved policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (Adopted June 2006) refer specifically to telecommunications. Telecommunications proposals are therefore determined in line with national guidance set out in NPPF.

Greater Manchester Digital Strategy 2018-2020

The foreword to this Digital Strategy states:

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'We live in a world where the number of digital devices has now passed the number of people. Digital technology is now shaping every aspect of our lives in ways which were inconceivable a generation ago: how we work, travel, shop, access services, meet people, communicate and are entertained.

Greater Manchester has always been a pioneer city region, with an eye for opportunity and the drive and pragmatism to seek out new solutions to old problems with almost 80000 digital and digital-intense creative businesses in Greater Manchester employing more than 82300 people generating £4.1bn of economic growth annually.

In the Greater Manchester Strategy we set a clear ambition to be a world-leading digital city region, and committed to taking an open, innovative and connective approach to delivering that ambition.

...to be a digital City-Region with a Difference and drive real change together, from the bottom up. We can only be a world leading city-region if we bridge the digital divide. Progress must be universal; geographically, socially and economically...using digital to connect young people to opportunity or tackle homelessness...we will capitalise on Greater Manchester's unique ability to use digital to connect and enhance our other high value sectors such as creative industries, health innovation and advanced manufacturing and materials.

The GM Digital Strategy asks why it is vital for Greater Manchester to be a leading digital City-Region and quotes:

"The future vitality of cities is increasingly based on their ability to use digital networks in intelligent, strategic ways" (Aspen Institute, Washington).

The Strategy goes on to state that:

...'digital technology has catalysed the interconnection of the global economy, with the internet enabling the free exchange of goods and services, providing consumers with greater choice and businesses with access to skills, resources and customers. As a result, people are now accessing more digital content and services from outside their own country, cross-border payments increasing, and small companies are more easily becoming more "multi-national".

Digital technology is increasingly the backbone of all industries, regardless of the nature and type of business. Embracing digital technology throughout all sectors, geographies and occupations is fundamental to Greater Manchester's current and future international competitiveness'.

"We want to be recognised as an international thought leader and do-er in digital innovation and adoption across our economy and communities"...

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'This strategy is therefore founded on evidence that becoming a leading digital city-region is imperative to deliver our wider vision. We must do it to deliver the economic, social and inclusion improvements we need and want to see. We can do it because we have the vision, leadership and both the industrial and political will, coupled with strong academic, industrial and community foundations and an exciting and disruptive set of emerging activities and technology'.

The Digital Strategy sets out the Greater Manchester Vision: A city with a Difference:

"It would be fantastic if we led the country in encouraging digital innovation which supports businesses and investment, creating jobs and opportunity, but focusing on improving outcomes for people such as loneliness or homelessness in our society.

I don't want Manchester to be just a smart city – I want it to be the smartest city" (Andy Burnham Mayor of Greater Manchester).

The strategy goes on to state that the Vision for Greater Manchester is 'to be one of the best places in the world for developing and harnessing digital technology and to be recognised as being a top 5 European Digital City Region by 2020 which:

- Empowers and enables residents to have the highest quality of life; and
- Supports the creation of high quality jobs and achieves the maximum possible productivity levels'.

This strategy for Greater Manchester is an open, connected and innovative city region....

'Our Vision for Greater Manchester is holistic, with digital technology driving improvement across all areas of economy and society. A world-leading digital city is therefore, one which its businesses, public service providers and citizens are using digital technology by default and to the fullest: to grow their businesses and improve productivity to access skills, training and employment opportunities, to address global challenges that have a local impact, such as ill health, social isolation, homelessness and pollution; to improve the quality and value for money of public services'.

The Strategy sets out the Goals and Measures. Goal 6 relates to Digital Infrastructure and aims that by 2022-23 the average download speed across fibre, mobile and wireless will exceed 100Mbps.

The benefits for delivering this strategy are noted as:

- For young people, better connected insights on children's development from the very early years right through to leaving school, a transformative range of career opportunities and a means through which they can be accessed;
- For Working Age Population, the ability to access broader range of high quality job opportunities, and set up own business more easily;

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Registered in England & Wales No. 08087551.

VAT No. GB142 8555 06

 Cornerstone, Hive 2,
1530 Arlington Business Park,
Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SA

- For business owners and investors, for greater range of opportunities to access the technology and support to digitise, opportunities to physically and digitally collaborate will be readily accessible and there will be more readily available flow of talent, capital and support to new innovative ideas and a market place that defines and presents problems and commissions solutions rather than buying off the shelf products and services.
- For Older people, there will be more support and solutions to social isolation, more ease and control for you and your family in terms of managing your own health care; and
- For all residents, a city that works around you in terms of living your life, where you can move around the city more easily and safely, improvements in, for example treating illness, improving air quality due to insights from pooled data, greater control over how and when you access public services.

Greater Manchester is aiming to become a world leading digital city by 2020. Greater Manchester plays a fundamental role in driving economic growth.

The Strategy notes that in terms of mobile internet, despite good public Wi-Fi coverage in most public buildings across Greater Manchester, and on Metrolink and many buses, Wi-Fi provision is patchy in public places and there are still barriers to access (registration requirements and cost) in many parts of Greater Manchester.

The Strategy also acknowledges that digital exclusion is closely linked with social exclusion.

The Greater Manchester Action Plan for Infrastructure at 8.1 States that the connectivity which Greater Manchester requires is to increase average mobile and fixed broadband internet speeds and aims to improve call and mobile coverage including securing a national 5G test bed status thus positioning Greater Manchester at the forefront of next generation 5G mobile.

The strategy notes 5 digital enablers: Social Networks, Mobile internet/apps, digital health, infotainment and e-commerce.

Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (June 2019)

This Local Industrial Strategy sets out how Greater Manchester (GM) will forge its future. It states that it will build on GM's position as a 'leading European digital city-region; enable the digitalisation of all sectors; and capitalise on the links between digital and creative industries that feed internationally significant clusters in broadcasting, content creation and media, and maximise growing assets in cyber security.

It aims to put in place the integrated 21st century infrastructure needed for digital driven, clean and inclusive growth.

A top 5 city-region for the digital economy in Europe, with full fibre broadband and 5G coverage.

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The Strategy states that GM will take a 'Made Smarter' approach to all industries, supporting firms to adopt new digital and creative techniques and enabling the digitalisation of all sectors.

The strategy has a specific section relating to infrastructure and acknowledges its importance:

'...The city-region now aims to upgrade, integrate and future-proof its infrastructure, to create a 21st century city-region with extreme digital connectivity, clean and inclusive growth and – through work with others – improved access to national and global markets.

Existing partnerships are working to improve digital infrastructure in the city-region to meet national targets of roll out of 5G technologies for most people by 2027'.

The Local Industrial Strategy sets out an objective to ensure the vision for infrastructure is met:

- World-class connectivity – digitally and through an integrated transport network within all parts of GM.

To achieve the ambitions of the GM Local Industrial Strategy it identifies actions around 5 foundations of productivity: Infrastructure, Ideas, People, Business Environment and Places. These are noted as being essential attributes of every successful economy. It also identifies opportunities grouped under 4 Grand Challenges – Artificial Intelligence and Data, the Ageing Society, Future Mobility and Clean Growth.

The Vision for the Digital, Creative and Media is set out in the Local Industrial Strategy and reproduced below:

'GM will be a leading European digital City-Region, with the infrastructure, skills and networks needed to digitise all sectors, and internationally significant clusters in broadcasting, content creation and media and cyber security'.

To help meet the vision the strategy states that GM will continue to transform the digital connectivity of the city-region to drive economic growth and innovation, working with Government to meet national targets of full roll-out of 5G technologies for most people by 2027.

The Local Industrial Strategy acknowledges that GM will aim to become one of the best digitally connected city-regions in the UK. It fully supports the development of 5G networks.

The Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint April 2020

The GM Digital Blueprint builds on the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy and states that this blueprint sets out the next chapter in Greater Manchester's ambition to be recognised as a

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world-leading digital city region, with an ongoing commitment to taking an open, innovative and connective approach to delivering that ambition.

It states that Greater Manchester remains committed to being a digital city-region. The ambition is still for Greater Manchester to be a top 5 European Digital City-Region and recognised globally for its digital innovation. Benefitting from top level physical infrastructure, and a highly skilled, ready-to-go digital workforce.

The Blueprint goes on to say that this is the place that does digital differently.

'We want our citizens' lives to be bettered, and for them to be empowered by the myriad of opportunities a digitally fuelled city-region provides'.

The Blueprint for Greater Manchester digital sets out a 3 year approach to meeting these ambitions:

...'investing heavily in digital infrastructure, connectivity and transport offering breadth and depth of expertise across digital and creative services, e commerce, technology, hardware and software.

We're creating a digital place where innovators from across the globe want to tap into and a place where businesses already here can thrive'.

The 3 year aims include:

- By 2023, the average download speed across fibre, cable mobile and wireless will exceed 100Mbps compared to a Q4 2017 baseline of 32Mbps.
- Employment and skills in digital and creative industries 86000 people employed in 2019 growing to 96000 in 2023.
- Overall economic growth £5 billion in creative digital and technology economy growing to £5.5 billion by 2025 and £7 billion by 2029.

The digital priorities are set out as follows:

- Empowering people
- Enabling innovative public services
- Digitally enabling all businesses
- Creating and scaling digital businesses
- Being a global digital influencer

Enablers to these priorities are noted as including extending world-class digital infrastructure:

'We will ensure that Greater Manchester has the digital infrastructure it needs to be a world class digital city region'.

The aims are noted as:

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- *Deliver ubiquitous high speed digital connectivity over full fibre and 4G and 5G mobile across the whole city region by 2025.*

Driving market investment in fibre and mobile by minimising roll out costs.

Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework 2040 (GMCA)

This is a pre-cursor to the GM Infrastructure Strategy. The aim is to focus on developing infrastructure which ultimately improves the lives of all those living and working within Greater Manchester.

The Infrastructure Framework acknowledges a number of key challenges, one of which is digital and the need to provide pervasive, affordable, resilient digital connectivity. The Framework notes that 'Digital technology is increasingly the backbone of the major industries and our daily lives'.

The Framework goes on to state that approaching 2040, GM will need to be a Smart and digitally ready City Region. To achieve this, and support on-going digitalisation, the region will require resilient fixed connectivity (through fixed fibre) supported by 5G (and subsequent technologies). It will also need to streamline the process for installation of new infrastructure within the street space.

The Framework notes the vision for the GM Infrastructure Strategy:

'Develop and maintain a holistic infrastructure system that is robust, accommodates sustainable growth and supports the ambitions of the Greater Manchester Strategy to make "Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old".'

The Greater Manchester Infrastructure Strategy should seek to:

- *Support the lives and well-being of people, communities and the environment within Greater Manchester.*
- *Be age-friendly and support the economic and social participation of both young and old.*
- *Support strategically identified growth for parts and communities within Greater Manchester.*
- *Be flexible, robust and meet the existing and future needs of the communities and technological change.*
- *Provide world-class connections and access to opportunity for all.*
- *Provide world-class digital infrastructure which provides a platform for GM to embrace emerging technological and societal changes.*
- *Support a carbon-neutral GM and be economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.*

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The Framework identifies a key infrastructure trend to 2040 as Digital (Telecommunications Operators) including mobile infrastructure:

- As the population and employment is due to rise:
 - more people will mean more homes and businesses, and more consumers of digital services.
 - There will be a growing demand for high-speed, resilient data connectivity to facilitate changing patterns such as shopping patterns moving online, whilst flexible working becomes more prevalent.
- Changing workforce:
 - More productive, higher skilled, higher paid jobs more specialised and skill activities needs digital infrastructure to support higher skilled industries – which may require increased digital infrastructure.
- Environmental Change:
 - Improving efficiencies of buildings and appliances. The use of smarter technologies within each infrastructure sector will look to improve efficiencies further.

The Framework comments on digitalisation noting the importance of it and how it has transformed the way in which we go about our everyday lives:

'We live in an increasingly digital world. Technologies that are visionary today rapidly become part of everyday life tomorrow. In turn, people's expectations are rising constantly. "Digital" now encompasses an increasing array of technologies, from sensors, smartphones and robots, to augmented reality, cloud computing and data analytics. These technologies are changing the way in which we live and places we live in. Digital technologies are being used to make cities more smooth running, more productive, and more democratic. The pervasiveness of digital technology in our lives represents a major change. For these technologies to function effectively, it is fundamental that a robust and diverse underpinning infrastructure is installed that ensures a future-proofed platform for the development of these and many new technologies for years to come.'

As our homes, businesses and cities become more reliant on digital technology to function the robustness of these systems becomes even more critical'.

The Framework states that *'anyone in GM should be able to access resilient, seamless connectivity at a speed they need anywhere and anytime'.*

- New technologies, artificial intelligence and atomisation:
 - Improvements in artificial intelligence and atomisation technologies will transform infrastructure sectors and business markets.
 - Digital infrastructure will be crucial to supporting future technology and a Smart City Region.
 - Embracing digital technology throughout all sectors, geographies and occupations is fundamental to GM's current and future international competitiveness.

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The Framework acknowledges that the vision of moving to a smart and digitally-ready city-region requires future digital infrastructure to be strong fixed resilient connectivity, supported by 5G (and beyond), big data systems and other nascent technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and machine learning. Without connectivity it is acknowledged that processing the sheer volumes of data necessary to create a network of communicating devices will be impossible. As such, the Framework states that big improvements are required to increase the provision of wired and wireless (through 5G or subsequent technologies and Wi-Fi provision) across GM. Without the more basic technology solutions (such as passive fibre connectivity and 5G) the smart-region solutions and value-added outcomes will struggle to be brought to fruition.

The Framework notes that 5G roll out is expected from 2020. However, the timing and costs of roll out is uncertain and international standards have yet to be agreed. It is possible that there will only be one network upon which providers deliver their services or that each provider might need to invest.

With regards to the Regional Centre if Challenge 8 is to be met to provide pervasive, affordable, resilient digital connectivity the challenge is early roll out of 5G especially in areas where mobile data use is congested such as the Regional Centre.

The Framework also states that GMCA and the Districts together with digital and telecommunication providers need to drive forward opportunities to promote connectivity and uptake in the Regional Centre.

Manchester Digital Strategy 2021-2026 (March 2022)

This digital strategy for Manchester is the vision for Manchester's digital future. It sets the priorities that our whole city – our public, private, voluntary and community organisations and residents – will be able to work on together to make Manchester one of the world's leading smart cities and digital economies in the next five years.

The priorities of the Manchester Digital Strategy will contribute directly to the delivery of five of the ten Our Manchester Strategy priorities:

- We will become a digitally inclusive city, with better digital infrastructure, access to digital technology and strong and lifelong digital skills.

We have used these to create four overarching themes for the Digital Strategy:

1. Smart people:

We will ensure that everyone can gain and sustain the skills, aspirations, and confidence to fully participate in the digital world; providing the basis for Manchester to become an inclusive, diverse, successful and ethical smart city.

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2. Digital places:

We will create digital neighbourhoods providing access, connectivity and support for all residents and businesses and digitally enabling enhanced health and wellbeing.

3. Future prosperity:

We will enable the digital economy and ecosystem to grow, continue to attract new digital businesses & sectors and support a resilient and inclusive economy.

4. Sustainable resilience:

We will use digital imaginatively for innovation to meet zero carbon and climate resilience goals and to create open inclusive connectivity with enhanced digital infrastructure as a utility not just a commodity.

Digital Places is about making sure the city itself, alongside its people, drives us towards a more digitally enabled future.

In a digital place, high quality and open digital infrastructure is ubiquitous at every level. Its leaders think towards the future and make sure that the changes we make to our physical environment today support the technological demands of tomorrow, and therefore much of Digital Places is about how we plan for and consider these future requirements in everything that we do to create a built environment that is fully digitally enabled.

Smart places are places where connectivity is ubiquitous and universal, where people, organisations and smart devices are all connected. They are places where information is collected and shared in a way that allows anyone to understand and interrogate it, coming up with their own solutions to our greatest challenges. Smart places are also climate-resilient and adaptive, supporting our transition to a zero carbon economy as well as being sustainable, adaptable and future-proofed.

Connectivity is also of critical importance to Manchester 's creative and cultural industries, which overlap with the digital and tech sectors. Our cultural sector has been reliant on digital to keep operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is a role for Digital Places in supporting the city 's Cultural Recovery Plan. The digital transformation of the sector is likely to continue, and we must support it by making it easier for creators to digitising, distributing and monetising artistic products online.

Secondly, we know that improved access and technology can enhance access to existing public services. Using the example of health services, digital delivery means that services become more accessible and have wider benefits, for example enabling older people to continue to live in their own homes. Digitisation of health and care records also provides the opportunity to better integrate services as well as offering an opportunity for innovation

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providing new approaches to tackling embedded health challenges in the City including Health Ageing.

Online Nation 2022 Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Figure 1.2 of the Online Nation 2022 report indicates that the percentage of UK online adults accessing the internet, by device, in 2021 was the highest by smartphone at 88%. In September 2021 73% of the time spent online by UK adults per day was on a smartphone.

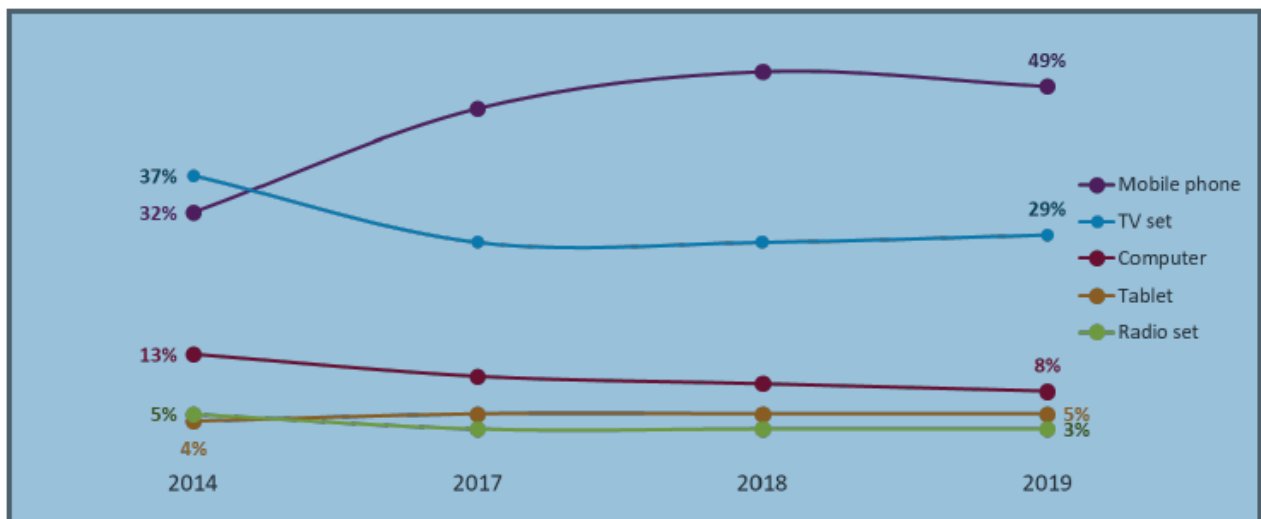
Figure 1.2: Percentage of UK online adults accessing the internet, by device: 2021

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

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

Reproduced from Online Nation 2022 Report

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



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

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

The Connected Nations December 2020 report is published as the UK continues to address the challenges of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic; a time when people, families and

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businesses have come to rely on their phone and broadband connections as never before. We report on how the networks have performed during this period and how the availability of services has evolved.

The report sets out in its findings:

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

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

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

A small, but significant number of properties are still struggling to get connected. We estimate that 43,000 premises cannot access either a decent fixed broadband service, or good 4G coverage, indoors.

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

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

The report acknowledges that "during the first COVID 19 lockdown, UK MNOs coped successfully with the changes in data and voice traffic volumes and distribution as many people began working from home and schools were shut during the Covid-19 spring lockdown. New peaks were reached for most of the network metrics reported by MNOs just before or during the week lockdown measures were first introduced across the UK in March 2020. Although these peaks generally reduced with the gradual easing of lockdown, they

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have remained higher than they were before (in line with the historical trend for incremental growth in data consumption)".

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

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

Levelling Up the United Kingdom (February 2022)

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

Chapter 3 - The Policy Programme:

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

This mission is focused on improving digital connectivity.

Digital connectivity: The case for action

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

More broadly, high quality digital infrastructure can deepen local labour markets through remote working, making it more attractive for both workers and companies to locate

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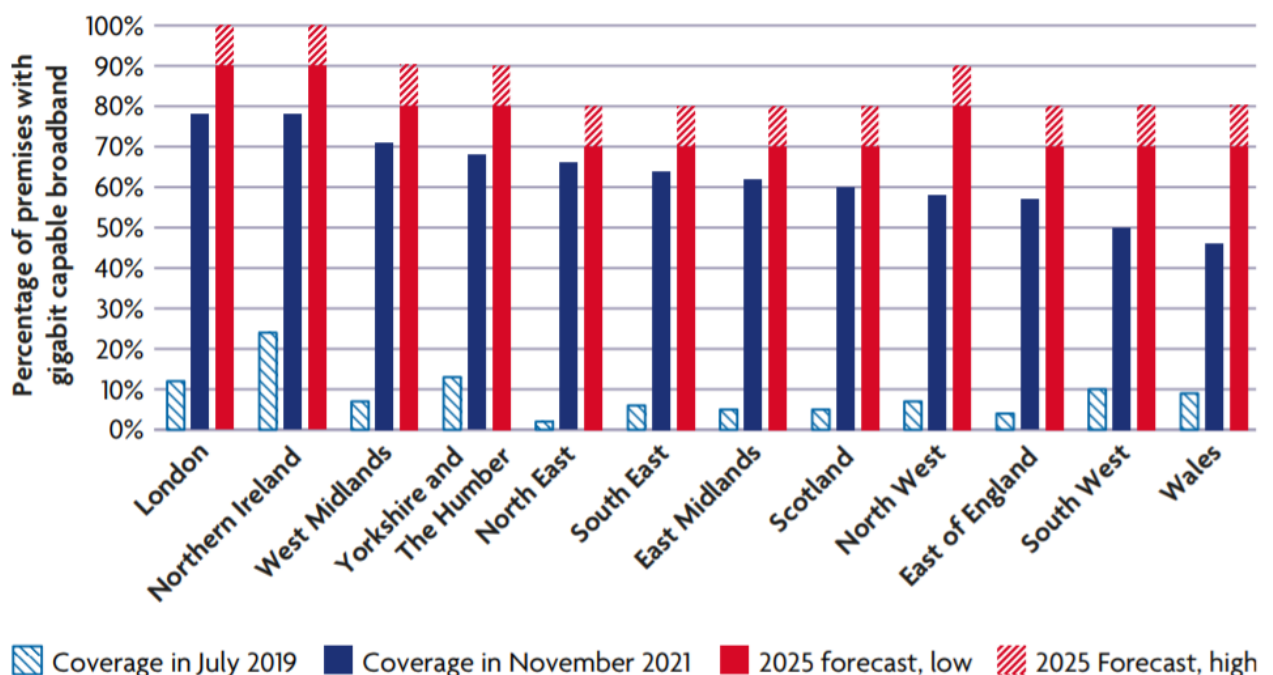
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regionally. It also allows for the development of high-value sectoral clusters, which can drive growth and jobs in new areas. Existing specialisms in the UK regions have the potential to generate strong tech clusters, such as fintech in Scotland and Wales, e-Commerce in the North West and Northern Ireland, and Agri-Tech in Yorkshire and the Humber. The sector also provides opportunities for raising living standards – median earnings for the sector are 50% higher than the UK average.

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

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

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



Source: Levelling Up the United Kingdom.

5G has the potential to radically change the way people live and make businesses more productive and competitive. The UK Government's ambition is for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. Since 2017, the UK Government has provided £200m in funding for 5G Testbeds and Trials, supporting over 200 startups and SMEs

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1530 Arlington Business Park,
Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SA

across a range of sectors – including healthcare, manufacturing, Agri-Tech and creative industries – to better understand how to use the technology to develop new solutions and services.

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

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

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

UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, April 2023

In April 2023, the UK Government published the 'UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy'¹, a plan for delivering world-class digital infrastructure which the government identifies as an essential enabler for its 5 priorities of building a better, more secure, more prosperous future for the UK, including growing the economy, and creating better-paid jobs and opportunity right across the country. In her foreword, the Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, Secretary of State for Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, provides context for the strategy:

*"5G will be the cornerstone of our digital economy. With higher capacity and lower latency, standalone **5G will drive growth** in the industries of today and tomorrow, including in emerging sectors like artificial intelligence where Britain leads the world. Just take smart ports, where 5G-enabled remote operation can help us to move containers more quickly, efficiently, and safely, boosting our international competitiveness. **5G can improve our public services**, too, in everything from education to social care. In transport, for example, we can use 5G to*

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Registered Address:
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VAT No. GB142 8555 06

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1530 Arlington Business Park,
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power forward progress in everything from real time travel information to augmented reality navigation and self-driving buses and taxis.... This is an incredible opportunity; widespread adoption of **5G could see £159 billion in productivity** benefits by 2035".

The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review, 2018 sets out the ambition of the Government for the UK to become a world leader in 5G technology and ensuring world class connectivity for all. This ambition was reaffirmed in the 'UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy', published in April 2023 which states in the Executive Summary:

"The next decade will see seismic changes both in terms of what wireless connectivity can deliver and how we can use it. The economic and social benefits from these changes promise to be vast, from supercharging growth to accelerating our transition to net zero. But these benefits can only be achieved with concerted action from government, industry, and others".

The Foreword of the 'UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy' by Julia Lopez MP 'Minister of State for Department for Science, Innovation and Technology' states inter-alia:

"The more our lives are conducted online, the more access to the internet becomes critical for social and economic opportunity.

This is why delivering world-class digital infrastructure to all Britons is a fundamental mission of this government - and our efforts to build it the modern equivalent in scale and ambition to the Victorians' construction of the railways. Our plan is for every corner of our country to get lightning fast connectivity, not only to give people real choices about where to live and work today but so they will not be left out of future technological revolutions because of poor infrastructure.

It is this sense of purpose that underpins Project Gigabit, our flagship £5 billion programme to reach hard-to-reach communities across the UK with gigabit-capable broadband. It is complemented by a staggering competition now underway between commercial suppliers to supply Britons with great connectivity.

Extraordinary progress is being made on coverage. When I began my role in September 2021, gigabit coverage was just over 50%. Now, it stands at almost 75%. With £1bn of Project Gigabit's funding now available to suppliers, our contracts are not just delivering better internet but skilled jobs everywhere from Blandford to Berwick. By the end of next year, we hope to have every part of our country under contract.

Which is why the time is right to turn our sights to mobile connectivity, where the same sense of mission is needed to deliver the kind of wireless infrastructure that will transform how we live our lives and run our economy. This is not simply a matter of improving download speeds as people browse the internet on their phones or dial into work calls. It is far more transformative than that'.

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The UK Wireless Strategy states that '4G technology revolutionised the way people use their mobile phones. What today is considered normal, a decade ago was ground-breaking. We have seen the growth of streaming services, like Netflix and Spotify, and gained constant access to high-quality, user-produced content for free on platforms like YouTube, transformed the way we shop online, travel around cities through access to apps like Uber and Bolt and use public services, such as booking NHS appointments through apps'.

The UK Government in the UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy' recognises that 'growth in the digital sector is nearly 6 times faster than across the economy as a whole.

Planning Assessment

The main issues arising from this prior approval notification are whether the mast and equipment cabinets, due to their scale and siting, would be a visually obtrusive feature which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area, and whether any perceived harm would outweigh the significant social and economic benefits associated with the increased service provision attributed to the proposal and other valid material considerations as outlined in the NPPF, which fully supports the roll out of 5G and the next generation connectivity to accelerate business opportunities and growth to ensure the economy is resilient and competitive, the Code of Practice, and also the relevant objectives and policies within the Rochdale Core Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework which fully supports Greater Manchester's position as a leading European digital city-region and the development of 5G networks.

The replacement site complies with the NPPF, Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework as it will improve capacity and provide new 5G services to this area of Middleton. Access to a high quality, reliable superfast mobile network is not just 'a nice to have' but an essential part of everyday life. Indeed many, including the former Minister for Digital Infrastructure Matt Warman, consider it to be the fourth utility service as important as gas, water and electricity, a life line for many especially during the COVID-19 pandemic where people were able to see their loved ones, speak to friends and family and arrange virtual meetings allowing some form of normality in a very abnormal situation.

The principle of development has been established by the Government when the new permitted development rights came in to force in April 2022, which enabled sites such as this one to be built under the operators permitted development rights, with prior approval for siting and appearance being the only matters that the local planning authority can take in to consideration (as the width of the replacement column and headframe is more than two thirds wider than the existing).

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

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

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

'Certain forms of telecommunication development, for example, mobile telephone masts, are known as 'permitted development' and subject to prior approval from the local planning authority. The prior approval procedure means that the principle of development is not an issue. The LPA can only consider the siting and appearance of the proposal'.

Siting

The siting of the proposed radio base station has been carefully considered. To this end, there are a number of existing vertical elements of street furniture in the immediate vicinity, including lighting columns, belisha beacons, road signage and another operators monopole. Consequently, the visual impact of the proposed radio base station will be minimised within the streetscene as the proposed monopole will assimilate well with the existing vertical structures already in situ in the immediate locale. This is in full accordance with the aspirations of the NPPF, Code of Practice, Policy P2 and Policy DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

The proposed replacement telecommunications mast and new equipment cabinets fully complies with the objectives of the NPPF. Government guidance states that in order to limit visual intrusion the number of radio and telecommunication masts and the sites should be kept to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network. Existing masts, buildings and other structures should be used unless the need of a new site has been justified.

This radio base station will replace the former site at the old Kirkway Service Station in line with the NPPF. The Code of Best Practice also acknowledges that new sites are necessary when existing sites are no longer available. However, the landlord has served a notice to quit to reduce the site area demise. This means that VMO2 and Vodafone are no longer able to share the same pole or area due to the lack of space. The operators' license obligations requires them to meet customers "reasonable demand". Reasonable demand would be to provide indoor coverage as customers expect to be able to use their handsets indoors. The operators also have a competitive market driven "requirement" to provide a high-quality service. The replacement column is essentially required to replace the 3G/4G coverage and capacity but will also provide new 5G services to the area. The replacement site will also reduce the overall number of radio base stations required which is fully in line with national guidance and The Code of Best Practice.

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Technical requirements have dictated the siting of the proposed equipment. The operator has spent a considerable amount of time identifying a potential site and the proposed location is considered to present the best balance between operational/technical requirements and environmental impact. As explained throughout this document, the search area is small due to the nature of reasoning for the site to be near to the existing site otherwise there will be hole in coverage.

The parameters for searching for a site in this area are set primarily by the location of the existing site at old Kirkway Service Station. This site was part of an integrated network and to ensure the minimum overall number of sites is required for the network, a replacement site in the same geographical area is necessary. The operator has completed an extensive site search for alternative locations and considers that this site will meet the operator's requirements to provide equivalent replacement 3G/4G coverage/capacity to the immediate area.

In line with the requirements of NPPF, there are no existing suitable telecommunications installations for the operator to share, that would provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. Similarly, there are no buildings which are suitable and available that the operator could utilise to operate their equipment. Therefore, a new ground based installation is required. The discounted options are set out above and their reasons for being discounted are fully explained with a search area map to show the limited room the operator has to find a replacement site.

3G and 4G signals by their very nature (as they carry high data rates) do not penetrate over long distances, (5G even less so), just a few hundred metres, depending on the topography of the land, building clutter and vegetation including trees in the area which can reduce their effectiveness. Therefore 3G, 4G and 5G radio base stations need to be close to their customer demand. Therefore, a new site is required to provide new 5G service provision as well as enhance their 3G and 4G coverage to this cell area. The operator's search area is naturally smaller, than would otherwise be the case if the operator wasn't already providing service provision from this location. This severely limits the options for siting a replacement installation in the area.

As Section 5 above demonstrates there are no more suitable sites that are located within less sensitive locations than the current proposed site, and, as this is a site to replace the existing coverage provided from old Kirkway Service Station which is even more restricted in locating a more suitable site in which to provide replacement and enhanced coverage to the target coverage area in this part of Middleton.

In line with NPPF, the proposed installation is an item of essential infrastructure and therefore will not cause any loss of privacy nor will any occupants of nearby properties be overlooked. The column and antennas do not emit any noise, odour, vibration, artificial light or disturbance from air. The only noise emitted is from a cooling fan within the equipment cabinets, which only operate during hot weather conditions. However, within a few metres the noise is inaudible, particularly when taking into account the ambient noise levels of the area which include passing traffic. The proposed installation will not cause any traffic

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generation as it is not a visitor destination. Maintenance of the equipment cabinets is usually once a year, where the engineer can walk to site with handheld tools.

Appearance

The design of the monopole has been carefully considered. To this end, it is a simple, functional slim-line monopole, with the main column being split in to two sections. The upper section is 406mm and the lower section is 457mm in width. This column width is essential in order to safely support the antennas at the top of the column and the feeders for all four technologies which are hidden within the main column. The column is proposed to be painted light grey, in order to blend in with the surrounding street furniture. However, the monopole can be painted any colour should the Local Planning Authority consider that an alternative colour would be more appropriate.

If the column were to be any lower, the antennas would not be able to clear the surrounding trees and urban clutter as such would not be able to operate effectively. A lower height would lead to a poor user experience for a large part of the target coverage area. As such, this would fail the operators design brief and an additional installation would have to be found leading to the proliferation of masts contrary to national planning guidance contained in the NPPF.

In order to reduce the visual impact on the surrounding area the antennas have been positioned in a dual stack formation, with 3 antennas at the top of the mast at an antenna top height of 19.7m and the other 3 antennas are proposed to be located underneath at an antenna top height of 18.40m. The antennas are positioned as tight as possible and will only be marginally wider than the main column width, rather than being a bulky headframe, and as such will not appear dissimilar to a shrouded design.

It is essential that the 5G antennas are unshrouded. As the radio frequencies get higher, required for data carrying, the antennas are less able to propagate through immediate blockages including Glass Reinforced Plastic, which is what the shroud is made from. This affects the 5G antennas more so than any other technology. The result being they cannot operate effectively close to Glass Reinforced Plastic or any other blocking material. Therefore there is a technical reason why the 5G antennas need to be unshrouded. The latest 4G technology are also affected more so than older technologies by propagation, and are therefore less efficient if they are shrouded. As such, the other antennas also need to be unshrouded to ensure that the latest technologies are provided to the surrounding area maximising their propagation.

The presence of the linear structures including road signage, another operators monopole and lighting columns will ensure that the proposed column will not appear incongruous within the streetscene. Thus, there will be no detrimental loss of visual amenity to the area or environmental intrusion in line with NPPF and Code of Practice.

The installation of this 20 metre high slim-line column designed to be as similar as possible to the other linear structures found in the immediate area will be no more at odds with the

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streetscene and character of the area than the other vertical structures within the immediate locale.

It is accepted that the height of the proposed installation is taller than other pieces of surrounding linear items of street furniture. This in itself is not a valid reason to conclude that it is not appropriate at a specific location. Indeed, Inspectors at appeal have noted that by their very nature to be effective masts are required to be taller than surrounding structures.

Telecommunications apparatus by their very nature must be taller than surrounding built and natural form to ensure its efficient operation. The Code of Practice explains this requirement fully in paragraph 39, *'Placing a mast within or adjacent to an existing group of trees, vegetation and other natural features can reduce visual impact... antennas will need to be sufficiently elevated to clear the tree-line...'* It is an essential piece of infrastructure, like pylons and telegraph poles. The proposal should not be considered negatively due to it being taller per se than the adjacent street furniture. Reasonable consideration of the proposal in the context of these vertical elements of street furniture can only conclude that the presence of these seeks to provide a setting wherein a base station may appear more congruous from which to provide an important service.

NPPF states at paragraph 119 the number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. In order to provide the latest 4G technology and 5G service in this locality, and to ensure that the coverage in the area is reliable and does not buffer or drop out, a new site is required. The operator has already explained above, it is unable to shroud the antennas, but the design is as slim as possible and will represent a simple, functional, vertical structure in the streetscene similar to the existing lighting columns on the street.

If the column and shroud were to be any slimmer, then the multi technologies would not be able to fit in the same installation and an additional radio base station would be required which would be contrary to national planning guidance. It would also not be structurally capable of supporting all the technologies including the latest 4G coverage as well as 5G service provision. If the column were to be the same width throughout then it would have to be as wide as the antennas at the top of the column. This would appear more visually prominent in the streetscene than the current proposals.

The design of the radio base station is one of the most sensitive designs available to the operators, designed to resemble typical existing urban linear street furniture. This is in line with the requirements of NPPF which supports equipment which is sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate [paragraph 119], as well as The Code of Practice.

The proposed new site accords with NPPF because the equipment will resemble other linear structures within the area and will expand the network, ensure high quality communications infrastructure is maintained whilst minimising the number of radio base stations in the area. Placing masts near similar structures such as lighting columns, utilising simple and unfussy designs is acknowledged in the Code of Practice on Mobile Network Development in

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England to be less likely to dominate and be in discord with the streetscene and as a result less likely to have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

Lack of Coverage – Material Consideration

In accordance with the NPPF, Policy SP1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy which states Rochdale's role is to ensure there is sustainable development and investment to meet national and sub-regional objectives, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework which encourages the expansion and improvement of mobile telecommunications infrastructure and the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy which supports measures to enhance or improve access to existing facilities, services and amenities to ensure Greater Manchester becomes a top 5 city region for the digital economy in Europe which will also contribute to business needs, quality of life of residents, and visitor requirements including access to information and communication technologies, the proposed installation is significant to enable continuous coverage of the telecommunication network, ensuring that this area of Middleton continues to get the mobile coverage it needs for VMO2 customers as well as new 5G coverage. It will also maintain and improve coverage for the Mobile Virtual Network Operator's (MVNOs) which use the VMO2 network which includes GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile, Sky Mobile, and Lyca Mobile on the VMO2 network. So the proposal will not only provide a service for the operator but those who buy network space off them, which is at least 4 with VMO2. This will provide a choice for those customers who consider the level of coverage in their area when selecting which operator they agree future contracts with.

The current proposals will facilitate the development of an advanced broadband telecommunications infrastructure in line with National Government guidance contained within the NPPF which supports infrastructure especially where growth takes place. By providing the latest 4G technology and new 5G service provision the proposals will support the aspirations of Central Government for everyone to have access to the superfast highway network wherever they are and that the majority of the population have access to a 5G service by 2027. It will also fully comply with the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Local Industrial strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework. By providing the latest 4G technology and new 5G service provision the proposals will also help meet the aspiration of the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy to be a world-leading digital city region. Embracing digital technology throughout all sectors, geographies and occupations is fundamental to Greater Manchester's current and future international competitiveness according to the Digital Strategy. Becoming a leading digital city-region is imperative to delivering the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy Vision of delivering the economic, social and inclusion improvements it needs and wants. It will help Greater Manchester become the 'smartest' city, an aspiration of the Greater Manchester Mayor. Digital growth plays a fundamental role in driving economic growth.

Providing 5G coverage in this area of the regional city will also be in line with the aspiration of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy to be one of the top 5 city-regions for the digital economy in Europe, with full fibre broadband and 5G coverage. It will also support the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy aim to upgrade, integrate and future-proof

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its infrastructure to create a 21st century city-region with extreme digital connectivity, clean and inclusive growth and improved access to national and global markets. The proposals will also support the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy of having world-class connectivity digitally with the infrastructure to digitalise all sectors. As a result, the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy fully supports the development of 5G networks.

In line with the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework which fully supports the development of 5G, the proposals will provide world-class connections and access to opportunity for all in this cell area, as well as providing world-class digital infrastructure which provides the platform for Greater Manchester to embrace emerging technologies and societal changes. As noted in the Infrastructure Framework 5G infrastructure is fundamental to enable digital technologies to function. The proposals will ensure that operators' customers in this cell area will be able to access resilient, seamless connectivity at a speed they need anywhere at any time. Without the more basic technology solutions such as 5G, the Framework acknowledges that smart-region solutions and value-added outcomes will struggle to be brought to fruition.

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

Without this radio base station, the operator's customers would experience increasing numbers of dropped calls and buffering unable to access the internet on their handheld devices. They would also not be able to access the 5G network, a demand which is increasing rapidly as customers update their handheld devices to ones that are 5G compatible, and one that Greater Manchester is embracing with its ambition to be a world leading digital city region. If the 5G network is not available, then the customers would not be able to utilise these handheld devices for the purposes in which they were purchased. This is contrary to the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy which seeks to improve digital infrastructure delivery to businesses and residents. It would also be contrary to the aspirations of Central Government which aspires to everyone having access to the superfast highway network wherever they are and being a world leader in 5G.

The proposed installation will help improve the area's economic prosperity, strengthen the urban economy's by supporting local businesses to start, grow, adapt and diversify. It will support a better environment for today and tomorrow by reducing the need to travel and in turn minimise carbon emissions, a key ambition of the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. The radio base station will support the delivery of healthcare provision and accessibility by enabling people greater access to online services, NHS appointment reminders (every missed NHS appointment costs the NHS

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approximately £160 source: NHS), reminders to take medicines, make appointments etc. As well as assisting hospital outpatient appointments and emergency consultations carried out remotely via video link, connected ambulances, live streaming of CCTV footage etc.

By enhancing the 2G, 3G and 4G service provision to the surrounding area and providing new 5G coverage into the operator's network, this would fully support the Greater Manchester's Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework.

The way 5G works, it is closely connected with the Smart City agenda and will enable centralized control of lots of different street infrastructure owned or managed by councils, such as streetlights, water meters and bus stops. Rochdale, as part of Greater Manchester, is fully committed to being a smart region and being a world-leading digital city region, as highlighted in the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. As such it needs the 21st century infrastructure to enable this objective to become a reality. A replacement installation in this location enabling 5G service provision to the Middleton area will ensure that this aspiration is fully met.

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

Therefore, the Government fully supports high quality communications infrastructure, even more so with the advent of 5G. The NPPF continues to strongly support telecommunications connectivity and states at paragraph 118 that local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks. It acknowledges that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being.

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

The replacement to the existing site in this location will fill the current gap in the latest high quality service provision and enable the operator and MVNOs who buy network space off these operators to maintain access to their handheld devices wherever they are for the purposes in which they were purchased. This is fully in line with the Central and Regional Government's aspirations that everyone has access to the superfast communications network, contained within the NPPF, the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy.

Access to the internet in whatever medium now impacts every facet of our lives but only benefits those who can access and use it. The benefits of internet connectivity are key for

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both residents and businesses alike and an a new radio base station in this location providing the latest 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G technologies will support Greater Manchester's aspirations to be a world-leading digital city-region and one which promotes the growth of the digital sector, increasing digital inclusion, so all people can access services, education and training.

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

As part of the operators 4G licence obligations, many customers will benefit significantly from a vastly improved service provision in this locality. They will be able to gain access to the very latest technologies and connectivity, to high speed data services. Digital technology has catalysed the interconnection of the global economy, with the internet enabling the free exchange of goods and services, providing consumers with greater choice and businesses with access to skills, resources and customers. Installing telecommunications equipment at this site will help Greater Manchester to meet its Vision of being a region with increased and sustainable healthy population to drive the city's productivity upwards, in line with the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, Local Industrial Strategy and the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework.

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

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

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Economic and Social Benefits

The NPPF strongly supports sustainable development, as does the authority's Local Plan in particular at Policy SD1, the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy and the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework and Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. Mobile communication plays a significant role in sustainable development, being able to access the internet via a mobile device allows people to access a wide range of central and local government services buy groceries, manage finances, apply for jobs/university, and carry out school projects, send emails, download applications, send and receive instant messages, participate in social media, streaming and downloading data to name just a few of the benefits of being able to use an internet enabled handheld device. It also allows people to work from home or on the move without needing to return to the office. Residents and businesses will enjoy better accessibility, assisting home-base working by improving the electronic means of communication and the roll-out of high-speed broadband helping to promote live-work development. This reduces travel time, carbon emissions and increases the speed in which information is processed/shared. The proposals therefore fully comply with NPPF and Rochdale Local Plan Policy SD1 to minimise the effects of climate change reducing the need to travel and therefore the carbon footprint. It will support a carbon-neutral Greater Manchester and be economically, environmentally and socially sustainable in line with the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework.

In such instances, as described above, the NPPF supports development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Enhancing the 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity in this area and providing new 5G services will fully meet this national policy objective. Continuing to transform the digital connectivity of the city-region to drive economic growth and innovation, working to meet national targets of full roll-out of 5G technology for most people by 2027 will comply with the ambitions of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy.

Mobile connectivity is essential to the future success of the economy. The combined value of 4G and 5G mobile connectivity is estimated to add £18.5bn to the economy by 2026 (Councils and Connectivity Sept 2018). Mobile connectivity is essential to creating a better society. Digital inclusion can help people gain employment, become more financially secure and improve health and well-being. Mobile connectivity is essential to fulfilling the potential of new technologies. Innovations such as artificial intelligence and connected cars will change how we work, spend our leisure time and run our public services.

Providing the latest digital infrastructure to enable improvements in digital technology empowers and enables residents to have the highest quality of life, supports the creation of high quality jobs and achieves the maximum productivity levels. It also helps the economy to be resilient and competitive. This is in accordance with Objective SO1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy. It will help Middleton become an area where its businesses, public service providers and citizens are using digital technology by default and to the fullest to grow their businesses and improve productivity to access skills, training and employment opportunities to address global challenges that have a local impact such as ill health, social isolation, and

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pollution; to improve living standards and well-being, helping people to lead prosperous and rewarding lives; and to improve the quality and value for money of public services.

The enclosed Cornerstone Local Authority Engagement Brochure September 2020, emphasises further the benefits of high quality mobile connectivity including: promoting economic growth by attracting investment from business, which creates jobs and regional prosperity in line with national and local economic strategies; helps local businesses to offer a broader range of services, boosting the local economy; helps local Councils to offer online services such as school admissions and local information for residents supports local companies by facilitating working from home, offers social benefits such as being able to connect with vulnerable family and friends (a life line during COVID 19 lockdown) or contact the emergency services 24/7, and helps local councils to offer online services such as paying council tax bills which provides a more efficient service to name but a few benefits.

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

Education:

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

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

Health:

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

5G will prove critical in providing the infrastructure required to deliver remote health services over the next decade. By design, 5G's ability to deliver real-time information (low latency), ultra-fast speeds (critical for high definition images and video), increased capacity and heightened security are going to be fundamental in scaling the patient benefits of remote healthcare and keeping medical records secure and private. For instance, trials have shown that connecting ambulance crews to expert resources using 5G allows paramedics to work with doctors and conduct specialist procedures in real time whilst on the road.

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

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Paragraph 38 of the revised NPPF states that:

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

Providing improved 3G and 4G coverage and capacity and new 5G service provision in this area will fully meet paragraph 38 of the NPPF, the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint and Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy which aspires Greater Manchester to be a world-leading digital city-region. These strategies and the Framework also support strengthening digital and data infrastructure (including 5G), and using data to help address challenges.

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

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

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

Indeed, MPs have noted in parliament that the UK's Superfast Broadband connectivity was 'relatively poor' and businesses were losing out from patchy coverage.

The Government recognises that widespread coverage of mobile connectivity is essential for people and businesses. People expect to be connected where they live, work, visit and travel. That is why the Government is committed to extending mobile geographical coverage further across the UK, with continuous mobile connectivity provided to all major roads and to being a world leader in 5G.

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

The Government is determined to ensure the UK receives the coverage and connectivity it needs. To this end, the Government wants to be a world leader in 5G, the next generation of wireless connectivity, and for communities to benefit from the investments in the new technology. The Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy and Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework aspiration align with the Government objectives of being a world leader in 5G. The proposed installation will fully support these national and local aspirations.

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

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

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

Further to the Government's commitment to improve connectivity, on 24th November 2016 the new permitted development rights for telecommunication operators came in to force, designed to lift the restrictions on mobile operators such is the significance and weight the Government place upon the benefits attached to modern connectivity.

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

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

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

The Government's continued strong support for connectivity is further evidenced by the DCMS who launched their UK wide Digital Connectivity Portal on 20 December 2018. The Digital connectivity portal provides guidance for local authorities and network providers on improving connectivity in local areas. The Government wants everyone in the UK to benefit from world-class connectivity no matter where they live, work or travel. The Future Telecommunications Infrastructure Review outlines a package of measures to create the right market and policy conditions to deliver world-class connectivity for citizens and businesses. As a result, the pressure to install a replacement radio base station in this area of Rochdale to provide 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G is significant.

On the 23 September 2020, the former Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman MP spoke about the ongoing work by the Government and telecoms industry to boost the UK's world class digital connectivity in his keynote speech at Connected Britain 2020²

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

...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

² https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/matt-warman-keynote-speech-at-connected-britain-2020?utm_source=01ad07cc-6884-4d9b-a0ca-8c212f0a4289&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

....since the start of the 5G Testbeds and trials programme, we've now funded 24 5G testbeds across the UK. Between them, those testbeds have trialled almost 70 different 5G technologies, products and applications. And more importantly than ever, we are investing in a range of sectors to foster, build and grow 5G cross wider industry...

...The world is in the middle of a digital revolution. COVID has accelerated 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...

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

In a more recent letter published by the former Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman MP on the 24 May 2021 (a copy is enclosed with the application docs) addressed to the local authority chief executives he spoke further about the Government's Commitment to extending mobile coverage:

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'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...

...The National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") for England states that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology, such as 5G...

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

On the 1 October 2020, as part of the Speed up Britain Campaign, The Centre of Policy Studies Report published *'Upwardly Mobile: How the UK can gain the full benefits of the 5G revolution'*³. The report identifies what the 5G opportunities are and what the Government needs to do so we can all benefit from this vital new technology. It states that delays to the rollout of 5G could cost the country tens of billions of pounds in lost economic output. The former Government advisers Alex Jackman and Nick King argue that Government's 'levelling up' agenda and the UK's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is at risk without a faster 5G rollout – to the tune of £41 billion.

The report highlights that if delays continue at their current rate, by 2027, over 11 million households and businesses could be missing out on vital digital connectivity. Improving digital infrastructure supports the Government's 'levelling up' agenda, by helping local areas to retain and attract businesses and talent as well as by reducing regional inequalities.

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

Using analysis by the independent consultancy Policy Points, the report estimates that if 5G coverage reaches a quarter more of the population than the Government's current target

³ <https://www.cps.org.uk/research/upwardly-mobile>

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of 51%, it will produce GDP gains of £41.7 billion by 2027. It highlights that the difference between the UK being a leader and a laggard in 5G adoption could be as much as £173 billion in incremental GDP over the coming decade, as estimated by the Future Communications Challenge Group.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The government is committed to extending mobile geographical coverage across the UK and providing uninterrupted mobile signal on all major roads, and to be a global leader in 5G... The government is investing £200 million in a programme of 5G testbeds and trials to encourage investment in 5G so that communities and businesses can benefit from this new technology. Our ambition is for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027. The increased connectivity and capacity offered by 5G is opening-up the potential for new, innovative services for individuals and industry...

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

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

- Enable the deployment of radio equipment housing on land without the need for prior approval, up to specified limits and excluding sites of special scientific interest, to support 5G deployment;*
- Strengthen existing masts up to specified limits to enable sites to be upgraded for 5G and for mast sharing without the need for prior approval;*
- Enable the deployment of building-based masts nearer to highways to support deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage, subject to prior approval and specified limits; and,*
- Enable higher new masts to deliver better mobile coverage and mast sharing, subject to prior approval and specified limits".*

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

A replacement radio base station in this location will ensure that the expansion of the electronic communications network is facilitated and that high quality communications infrastructure is provided to the immediate area. This is in full accordance with the operator's

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4G license obligations and the Greater Manchester aims and aspirations to expand and improve telecommunications mobile coverage as required and to have the latest high quality 5G infrastructure, promoting and growing the digital sector and increasing digital inclusion.

Summary

The proposed installation will enable the operators to provide replacement 2G/3G/4G and new 5G services to the Middleton. Thus, providing a high-quality service to its customers and access to the latest technologies whenever and wherever they are.

Without this proposal, there would be a fundamental loss of service in the area following the removal of the operators ability to upgrade the existing site at Old Kirkway Service Station, as the landowner has served a valid notification to quit in order to re-develop the land. There will be significant detrimental social and economic impacts should a replacement not be found.

Installing a radio base station in this location, maintaining 2G/3G/4G coverage and providing new 5G services will fully meet the national Governments aim of 'ensuring that everyone is connected to the information superhighway' and the national policies set out in NPPF.

The social and economic benefits of providing reliable and high quality fixed and mobile broadband connections support growth in productivity, efficiency and labour force participation across the whole economy. These benefits are strong material considerations which outweigh any minor loss of visual amenity to the surrounding area.

Site selection was progressed in accordance with the applicants licence obligations, advice in NNPF and the Code of Best Practice and represents the least environmentally intrusive, technically suitable, available option.

The social and economic benefits of providing reliable and high quality mobile broadband connections including 5G supports growth in productivity, efficiency and labour force participation across the whole economy. This is fully supported by the NPPF, the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework and Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. These benefits are strong material considerations which outweigh any perceived loss of visual amenity to the surrounding area.

Confirmation that submitted drawings have been checked for accuracy

Name: (Agent)	Josh Fiteni	Telephone:	Tel: +44 (0)161 785 4500
Company:	Clarke Telecom Ltd		Mob: +44 (0) 7920 482985
Company Address:	Unit E, Madison Place	Email Address:	Josh.Fiteni@Clarke-Telecom.com

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 Cornerstone, Hive 2,
1530 Arlington Business Park,
Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SA

Signed:

Northampton Road,
Manchester, M40
5AG

Date:

03/07/2024

Position:

joshua fiteni

Town Planner

(on behalf of Cornerstone)

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