

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

1. Site Details

Site Name:	Woodbine Street East	Site Address:	Rooftop at Woodbine Street East, Rochdale, Greater Manchester OL16 5LB
National Grid Reference:	E: 390750 N: 412425		
Site Ref Number:	CTIL_12780426	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: Upgrade of existing site.		
Were industry site databases checked for suitable sites by the operator:		No
If no explain why: Upgrade of existing site.		

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
Summary of outcome/Main issues raised: A pre-application consultation letter and a set of site plans were sent to the Local Planning Authority via email, dated 19/05/2023. No comments received to date.	

Annual area wide information to planning authority

¹ Macro or Micro

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Has annual area wide information been provided?	No
If no explain why:	
Summary issues raised: Cornerstones commercial relationship with VMO2 has changed, effectively increasing their independence to work with other companies in the deployment of mobile infrastructure. It means Cornerstone 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. Cornerstones aim to engage and work with the planning department at the earliest opportunity from when they are instructed to deliver new infrastructure within your Local Authority area and often conduct strategic pre-rollout engagement meetings to discuss their wider rollout. If your Local Authority would like a meeting to discuss wider Cornerstone rollout plans, then please advise. Cornerstones recognise the importance of developing long term partnerships and will always work with you to deliver improved mobile connectivity.	

Community Consultation

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model:	Red	Amber	Green
Outline of consultation carried out: A pre-application consultation letters and a set of site plans were sent to the local ward councillors for Kingsway ward (Cllrs R Massey, D Ali and S Ahmed) via email, dated 19/05/2023. A pre-application consultation letter and a set of site plans were sent to the local MP for Rochdale (Mr T Lloyd) via email, dated 19/05/2023. Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of relevant correspondence): No comments received to date.			

School/College

Location of site in relation to school/college (include name of school/college): St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Muriel Street, Rochdale OL16 5JQ Outline of consultation carried out with school/college (include evidence of consultation): A pre-application consultation letter and a set of site plans were sent to the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors for St Peter's Church of England Primary School via email, dated 19/05/2023. Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of main correspondence):

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No comments received to date.

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

Will the structure be within 3km of an aerodrome or airfield?		No
Has the Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for Defence/Aerodrome Operator been notified?		No
Details of response: No aerodromes within 3km of the proposed area.		

Developer's Notice

Copy of Developer's Notice enclosed?		Yes	
Date served:	A Developer's Notice and copy of the proposal drawings were sent to the owner by recorded delivery on 29/06/2023. A copy of the Developer's Notice and have been enclosed with the application, including email reply confirming that it was received.		

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3. Proposed Development

The proposed site:

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

As part of Cornerstone and VMO2's network improvement programme, VMO2 are in the process of upgrading a number of their existing sites in order to provide improved 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity, and new 5G service provision. This is fully in line with the Government's aim to ensure that everyone is connected to the superhighway.

As part of VMO2's continued network improvement program, there is a specific requirement to upgrade the existing installation on the rooftop of Moss Mill Industrial Estate, to provide improved 2G, 3G, 4G and new 5G coverage and capacity, ensuring that this area of Rochdale has access to the latest technologies.

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Figure 1. Existing Site

The site is an established radio base station comprising 6 no. pole-mounted antennas, with an equipment cabin, located on the rooftop of Moss Mill Industrial Estate.

The site is located in an industrial/commercial area, with further businesses located to the north on the opposite side of the Rochdale Canal. There are residential properties to the south and north-west. The land to the east and west of the proposed site comprises of commercial properties.

The existing site has been in situ for a number of years and forms an established part of the network for the operator in this area. The proposal is to upgrade the existing site.

The application site is viewed in the context of the Moss Mill Industrial Estate and the surrounding commercial properties, and with it being on the rooftop it is not within the natural

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eyeline of passers-by. Views of the site from public vantage points on Woodbine Street East, to the south, are partially screened by mature trees. The site will be visible from the residential areas to the south-east, south-west and north-west, however, it will be seen in a context of industrial estate, which will minimise the visual impact on the area. Some parts of the rooftop are also host to another telecom's operator. The existing equipment is already an established part of the streetscene and roofscape.

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

The amendments to the existing radio base station will enable enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity to the surrounding area as well as new 5G service provision to ensure high quality customer experience is obtained as demands on the network increase and technologies change. In addition, due to the design, two operators will be able to maintain and enhance their existing 2G, 3G and 4G coverage whilst also being able to provide 5G service provision to the immediate area of Rochdale.

Type of Structure (e.g. tower, mast, etc): CS5SG Tower with Headframe

Description:

The proposed works comprise the removal of existing 6 no. antennas to be replaced with 12 no. antennas mounted on new Delta headframe on new 7.5m lattice stub tower mounted on steel grillage, installation of 4 no. 300mm dishes, and ancillary development thereto, including 36 no. Ericsson Radio Systems (ERSs), 2 no. GPS.

Overall Height: 37.90 metres to top of highest antenna.

Height of existing building (where applicable):

30 Metres

Equipment Housing: Located internally within equipment room

Length:

N/A Metres

Width:

N/A Metres

Height:

N/A Metres

Materials (as applicable):

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

Steel – Galvanised

Equipment housing – type of material and external colour:

N/A

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

The existing radio base station has been in situ in this location for a number of years and has become an established feature in the streetscene in this area of Rochdale. Technology advances (including 5G service provision) and additional demands on the operator's mobile network system in the area have meant that replacement upgraded antennas need to be installed to facilitate all the data that is required to be carried for mobile superfast broadband. This enables customers to continue to be able to use their handheld devices for the purposes in which they have become accustomed, and now rely on in the modern world we live in, a similar scenario to the reliance on gas and electricity. However, these new technologies for the latest 4G and 5G service provision and the design of the antennas required for them means that the overall height of the apparatus on the rooftop needs to

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increase in order to be technically feasible and deliver adequate levels of coverage to the target area.

The operator has carefully considered the siting and design of the upgraded equipment. It is proposed to upgrade an existing telecommunications site, which utilises an existing building. The building also hosts existing third-party operator equipment. This is in full accordance with NPPF and Code of Practice guidance in that a sequential approach should be taken and existing sites should be upgraded first wherever possible, before seeking to install new sites.

VMO2 and Vodafone requires new 5G technology to be installed into its network in this cell area. This site is currently being utilised by Vodafone to provide 2G, 3G and 4G service provision. This operator also needs to be able to provide 5G technology in this area. Due to the large data that is carried by this new technology the existing antennas cannot be utilised for 5G as well as 2G, 3G and 4G services for both operators.

To this end. The 12no. antennas will be located on a new 7.5m stub tower which essential to ensure these antennas as well as other equipment can be safely supported. The new antennas require a top height of 37.9m. However, the proposed antennas will have a similar appearance, will be made of the same materials and will be of the same colouring as the existing antennas already in situ in this location, thus minimising their appearance in the streetscene.

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 (enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G, and new 5G coverage), the proposed top heights of the replacement antennas are essential to enable the antennas to clear the rooftop without clipping and reach the target coverage area. The antennas will exceed the tallest part of the building by 7.9 metres. If the antennas were to be any lower in height, then they would not be able to provide the necessary high-quality communications coverage which is required for everyday access to high speed data in this area of Rochdale, which users of their handheld devices have come to expect in this 21st Century technological age.

The new antennas need to handle significantly more data and capacity than the existing antennas and as such need to be slightly bigger and cannot be GRP shrouded given the penetration of 5G signal and therefore are required to be exposed in order to accommodate all the technologies including 5G in the one installation, without the need for an additional installation elsewhere within this area of Rochdale.

The scheme also proposes the installation of 4 no. transmission dishes at 300mm diameter. Transmission dishes need a clear line of sight to other dishes in the network to allow them to work effectively. Therefore, they must be located at centre-line heights of 34 metres AGL to achieve a clear line of sight to other dishes in the network.

It is also proposed to install ERSs for each provider. This aspect of the proposal falls within the remit of 'ancillary development' and do not require permission in their own right. They are

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small for telecommunications apparatus, approximately the size of a shoe box. They are designed to act like a booster to make the antennas more efficient.

The GPS modules are very small about the size of a tennis ball. They will be located at the top of the column and therefore will not be able to be seen from ground level.

The proposed equipment cabinets will be located internally within the equipment room and thus will not be visible.

It is therefore considered that the proposal before you strike a good balance between environmental impact and operational considerations. The proposed height and design represent the best compromise between the visual impact of the proposal on the surrounding area and meeting the multi technical requirements for the site. Taking all matters into account, it is considered that the upgrade of the existing telecommunications site on the rooftop at Moss Mill Industrial Estate, to enable the enhancement of 2G, 3G and 4G service provision and new 5G coverage to the surrounding area of Rochdale, would not appear out of place within its surroundings and would provide enhanced high quality, reliable and secure coverage and capacity, delivering the capability for a multi hi-tech service and utilising an existing building.

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Health and Safety - including ICNIRP compliance International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Declaration attached (see below) International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection public compliance is determined by mathematical calculation and implemented by careful location of antennas, access restrictions and/or barriers and signage as necessary. Members of the public 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 operates its network in such a way the radio frequency power outputs are kept to the lowest levels commensurate with effective service provision. As part of 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

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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.

There is a specific requirement to upgrade the existing radio base station at this location to enable enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity and new 5G coverage for VMO2 and Vodafone, to the area of Rochdale. This ensures customers are able to continue to use their handheld devices for the purposes in which they have become accustomed, whilst on the move, as demands on the system for greater capacity augment as more customers access the data on the operator's network.

Mobile connectivity and service is required where customers live, work and play. 5G coverage and superfast mobile broadband data capacity demand will continue to increase exponentially with the introduction of IoT (Internet of Things), machine to machine connectivity, automated transport/industry and other 'smart' applications. To this end, the existing infrastructure within the built environment has had to be reviewed and adapted as appropriate.

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5. Site Selection Process

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

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

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

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

In accordance with the above sequential approach, the proposal is to upgrade the existing radio base station in this location to provide enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and new 5G service provision.

Site Type	Site name and address	National Grid Reference	Reason for not choosing site
N/A	N/A	N/A	Upgrade of an existing site.

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

As referred to above, the applicant has taken a sequential approach and is seeking to upgrade the existing established telecommunications site. Due to the technical requirements, to provide enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and new 5G coverage to the area for VMO2, upgraded antennas are required. The upgraded antennas need to sit at a slightly higher height than the existing in order to avoid clipping on the rooftop and provide sufficient coverage to the target coverage area.

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These amendments to the existing radio base station will ensure that the latest superfast technologies will be able to be accessed by users in this area, in line with the operator's legal license obligations, and the Government's aspirations that everyone has access to the latest information superhighway network and the customers' expectations that their handheld devices are able to operate wherever they are located whether that be indoors or outside.

It is considered that utilising an existing established radio base station installation is preferable to pursuing a second base station within the immediate vicinity, as it would reduce the visual impact therefore preserving the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Given the makeup of the area and the siting of existing telecoms infrastructure on the site, it was established that the upgrading of facilities through the use of existing infrastructure would be the most viable solution. Based on this sequential approach no other sites have been considered.

Land use planning designations:

No land-use designation 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 (July 2021)

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

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The NPPF continues to support the expansion of electronic communications networks at paragraph 114. It notes that policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered 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 115 of the NPPF retains the requirement to minimise the number of installations consistent with the efficient operation of the network but also includes being consistent with the needs of consumers and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion.

Paragraph 118 of the NPPF retains the guidance set out in paragraph 46 of the 2012 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 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'.

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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

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. 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.

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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 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:

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- **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.
- **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.

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- **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'*.

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.'*

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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.

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**

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- **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:
- 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 comprises the Rochdale Core Strategy and Rochdale UDP. Rochdale's development plan currently comprises:

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- Rochdale Core Strategy (2016); and
- Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan Policies (2006).

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan Policies (Adopted 2006)

Policy CF6 relates specifically to telecommunications development and states as follows:

“Applications for planning permission or for prior approval (as required under Part 24 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995) for telecommunications masts, satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae on masts, and satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae on a building or structure will be permitted where the following requirements are met:

- a) In the case of satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae on a building or structure the equipment is not detrimental to the character and design of the building or structure, to the character of the local street scene or to the visual amenity of the area.
- b) In the case of telecommunications masts the development is not detrimental to the character and appearance of the local street scene or the visual amenity of the area.
- c) The opportunity is taken to share sites or erect telecommunications equipment on an existing mast, building or other structure, unless this would be unacceptable in terms of increased height or visual clutter.
- d) An applicant provides evidence of compliance with the Government guidelines on health impact of telecommunication use.
- e) The equipment is sited and designed so as to minimise its visual impact subject to technical and operational considerations; and
- f) The operator removes any apparatus when it becomes redundant.

The Council will use conditions and, where necessary, legal agreements to secure the above.

In the case of developments affecting landscape character. Sites and features of nature conservation value, sites of archaeology importance, a Conservation Area and Listed Buildings or their settings, applications will not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that:

- i. The siting, scale or proliferation of facilities are not likely to injure significantly the special character or appearance of such areas, or that.
- ii. For technical reasons, no alternative location is suitable and the proposed development is sited so as to minimise any injury to that special character appearance.”

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Policy G/BE/1 (Design Quality) is a general design policy which states that development will be required to respond to its physical context, respect the positive character of the local area in which it is situated, and contribute towards local identity and distinctiveness.

Policy BE/2 (Design Criteria for New Development) states that the design and layout of new development will be required to be compatible with or improve their surroundings by virtue of their scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, architectural style and means of enclosure.

Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted 2016)

Policy P1 (Improving Image) is a general design policy which states that the Council will require new development to be of high quality design and improves the image of the Borough.

Policy P2 (Protecting and Enhancing Character, landscape and Heritage) deals with protecting and enhancing the Borough's character and distinctiveness.

Greater Manchester Digital Strategy (2018-2020)

The foreword to this Digital Strategy states:

'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:

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"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" ...

'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'.

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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;
- 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 marketplace 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.

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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.

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

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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 2023-26

The blueprint has been developed in collaboration with stakeholders from across Greater Manchester's digital sector and shares strategic commitments to put our people, our environment, and our place firmly at the heart of our plans.

The purpose of this Digital Blueprint is to better the lives of people and for them to be empowered by the opportunities a digitally fuelled city-region brings. To use technology and data better to make this a greener, fairer, more prosperous city region.

The ambition for the Greater Manchester set in the Digital Blueprint is to be world-leading digital city-region, where people, places and environment are at the heart of the plans. It sets the goal to have more inclusive and sustainable approach to build on the region's greatest assets.

Digital Blueprints aims for Greater Manchester to be a place with the fastest-growing digital economy in Europe, where communities, business, academia and public services work together to create opportunity, innovate and invent; and where growth benefits everybody. Where Greater Manchester is a world-leading digital city-region, recognised globally for its digital innovation. Just in 2022 there was £532 million invested in Greater Manchester companies, and over 69000 creative, digital and tech sector roles advertised.

The Blueprint recognises the potential for Greater Manchester for businesses growth. With the world class digital infrastructure, and existing physical infrastructure, the region can create a digital place, into which entrepreneurs and innovators from across the globe want to connect. 78% of companies in digital sector within Greater Manchester reported expansion in 2022 (source: Manchester Digital Skills Audit).

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The Digital Blueprint underpins and supports the commitments in the Greater Manchester Strategy 2021-31. It has also set priorities that will help to digitally enabling a greener, fairer, more prosperous city-region for everyone, those are:

- Empowering people and communities
- Building responsible, data driven public services
- Enabling a resilient and prosperous economy
- Creating connected, inclusive, sustainable places
- Strengthening our position as a global digital influencer

Digitally enabling a resilient and prosperous economy – to achieve this we will both enable all businesses to use technology better and support the creation and scaling of digital organisations for the benefit of the UK and the people of Greater Manchester.

Creating connected, inclusive, sustainable places – to mission of this priority is to build world class digital infrastructure, ethically using technology and to create resilient, connected, accessible and sustainable places for everyone. As one of the steps to ensure fulfilment of this priority will be provision of world class digital infrastructure that stimulates economic growth and enables the development of our growth zones, across sectors and locations.

The key strategic enablers set in the GM Digital Blueprint are:

- Building digital skills and literacy for life, education, work and business
- Strengthening our digital talent pipeline
- Extending our world class digital infrastructure, technology and data
- Harnessing academia, testbeds and research

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 states 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.

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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.*

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

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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.

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.

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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.

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

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

Online Nation 2022 Report (June 2022)

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%).

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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.

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.

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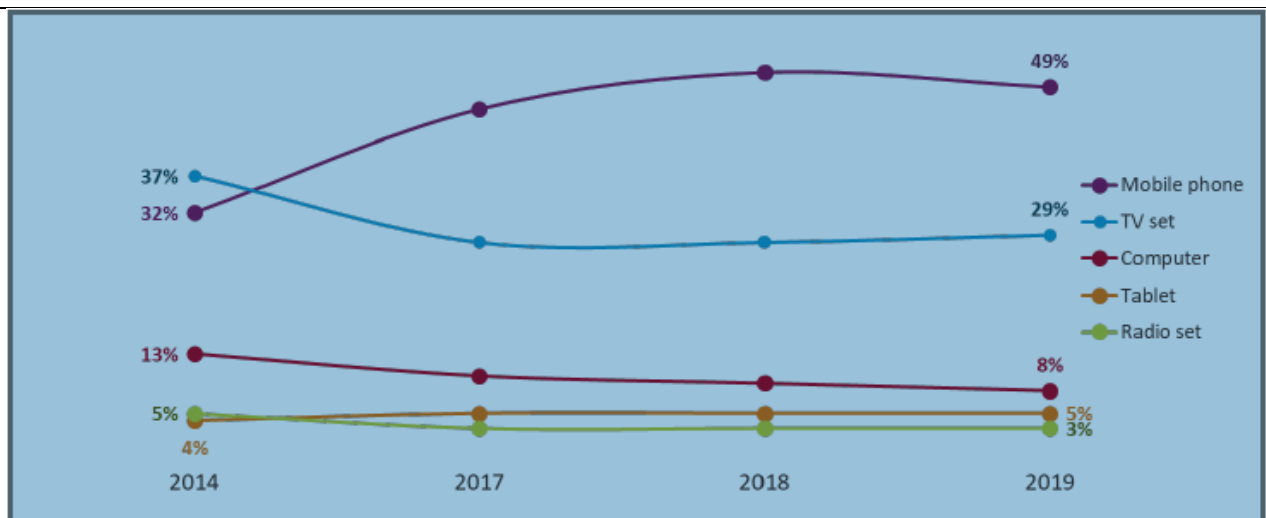
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Source: Ofcom Adults' Media Literacy Tracker 2014-2019

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'. 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 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

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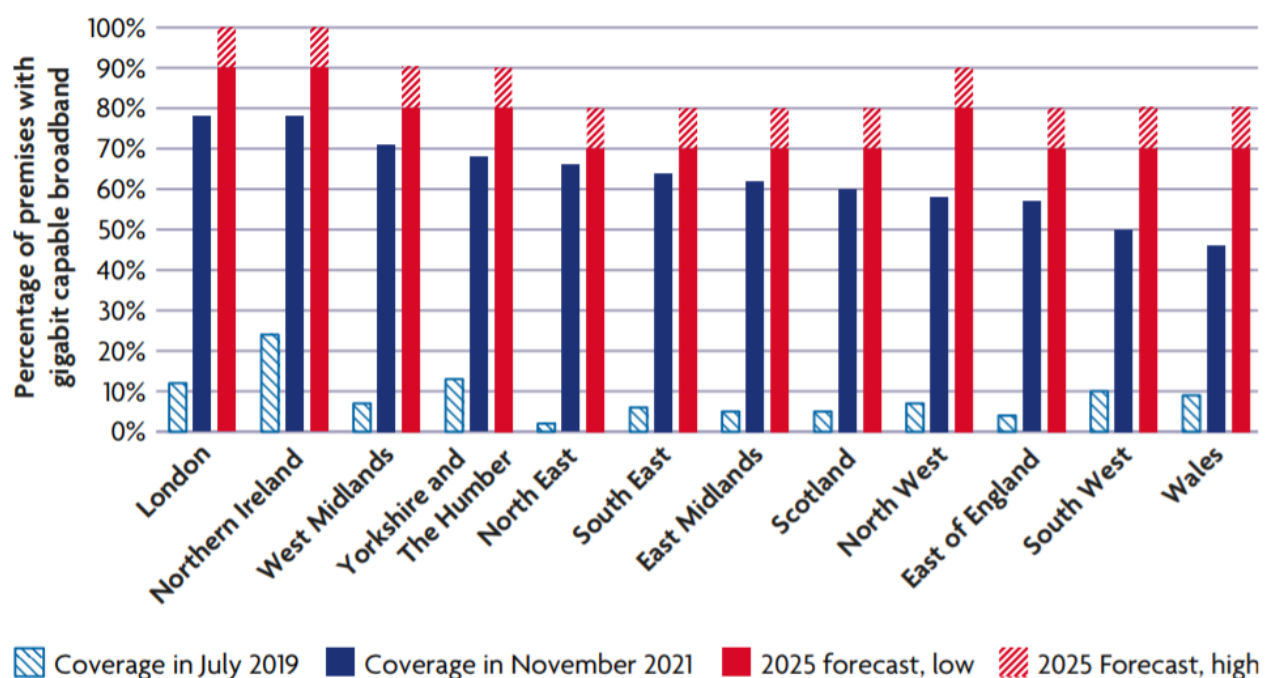
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In 2020, the UK Government published the National Infrastructure Strategy, committing to providing £5bn in public funding to roll out gigabit broadband to at least 85% of the country by 2025, and subsequently to as close to 100% as possible, working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

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 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.

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

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devolved administrations to consider how best to share the insights and evaluation of the programme to help build digital skills capability across the UK.

Planning Assessment

The main issues arising from this prior approval notification are whether the upgraded antennas and additional dishes on the rooftop of Moss Mill Industrial Estate, 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, and also the relevant objectives and policies within the Rochdale UDP, Rochdale Core Strategy, as well as the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, the Greater Manchester LIS, and the Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint.

The principle of siting telecommunications equipment on the rooftop of Moss Mill Industrial Estate was accepted many years ago by the Council. The installation has been in situ for many years and is an established feature of the streetscene in this area. The rooftop currently hosts equipment for the operators, providing coverage to this area of Rochdale. As previously stated, the 6 no. existing antennas will be removed and replaced with 12 no. antennas which are required to be located on a new 7.5m stub tower to support them.

The proposed upgrade fully complies with the NPPF, the Rochdale UDP, Rochdale Core Strategy, as well as the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, the Greater Manchester LIS, and the Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint as it will improve capacity and provide new 5G services to this area of Rochdale. 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 lifeline 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 height of the tallest mast exceeds the height of the highest part of the building by more than 6 metres (7.90 metres)).

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 proposal is for the upgrade of the existing telecommunications site located at Moss Mill Industrial Estate. The principle of telecommunications development in this location has already been accepted by the Local Planning Authority. The upgrade of an existing site is wholly in line with national planning policy guidance on taking a sequential approach and seeking to upgrade existing sites first. A previous application for an upgrade at this location was approved in November 2022, LPA ref: 22/01210/TELE. Previously approved application was in relation of replacement of 6 no. existing antennas, and installation of 12 no. new antennas on a 3.5m high lattice stub tower. The current proposal relates to installation of new antennas on a 7.5m high lattice stub tower; this is driven by the technical requirements in order to provide coverage to the target area. The existing radio base station has been in situ in this location for a number of years and has become an established feature in the streetscene, due to that it is considered that a slight increase in height will not result in substantial visual loss.

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 needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability should be encouraged. Where new sites are required equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate. The proposal fully complies with this Government guidance. The existing site will be upgraded, allowing VMO2 and Vodafone to provide enhanced capacity and new 5G services to the area. This is in line with the guidance in the NPPF and Code of Practice, as well as the aims to improve connectivity as outlined in the Rochdale UDP, as well as the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, the Greater Manchester LIS, and the Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint.

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The proposed upgrade to the existing radio base station will enhance VMO2's and Vodafone's customer experience by providing improved 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity as well as new 5G services to the surrounding area of Rochdale. It will enable the operators' customers to continue to utilise their handheld devices for the purposes in which they have become accustomed, as well as being able to access the latest technology wherever they are whether that be indoors or outside. The design promotes site sharing and minimises the need for a new installation in the area. It offers the best environmental solution, limiting the number of new sites required, limiting the visual intrusion in the area. This is in full accordance with NPPF and the Code of Practice, as well as Policies CF6, GBE1 and BE2 of the Rochdale UDP, Policies P1 and P2 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

Appearance

The proposal has been carefully considered, particularly in regard to the host building's location which majority of is an industrial area with residential properties to the south. To this end, the new antennas will resemble as closely as possible the existing antennas that are to be removed. However as previously stated the new antennas need to be located on a new stub tower. The new antennas will be made from the same type of materials, same colour and a similar size to the existing antennas although they will need to be slightly bigger and wider in order to support all the latest technologies on the one rooftop. This minimises visual amenity in line with Policies CF6, GBE1 and BE2 of the Rochdale UDP, Policies P1 and P2 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

NPPF states at paragraph 115 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. It accepts that new sites might be required for 5G networks (para 115). This is the case in this instance, in order to provide a new 5G service in this locality, the operator is unable to utilise the existing antennas and must therefore replace them with upgraded antennas to provide the latest and new technologies to the surrounding area.

The design of the radio base station is one of the most sensitive designs available to the operator, which will upgrade an existing site which utilises an existing building. This is in line with the requirements of NPPF which supports equipment which is sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate [paragraph 113], The Code of Practice as well as the aspirations of Policies CF6, GBE1 and BE2 of the Rochdale UDP, Policies P1 and P2 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

Lack of Coverage – Material Consideration

In accordance with the NPPF, the proposed upgrade to the existing installation is significant to enable continuous coverage of the telecommunication network, ensuring that this area of Greater Manchester continues to get the mobile coverage it needs for VMO2 and Vodafone 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 and Vodafone network which includes VOXI, Lebara Mobile and Talkmobile on the Vodafone network and

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GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile, Sky Mobile, Talk Talk Mobile, and Lyca Mobile on the VMO2 network. So, the proposal will not only provide a service for two operators but those who buy network space off them, which is at least 5 with VMO2 and 3 with Vodafone. This will provide a choice for those customers who consider the level of coverage in their area when selecting which operator, they agree 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. It will also fully comply with Policy CF6 of the Rochdale UDP, which improves digital infrastructure delivery to businesses and residents. 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 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 its infrastructure to create a 21st century cityregion 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 Local Industrial Strategy fully supports the development of 5G networks.

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 upgrade to the existing 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. 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

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to UDP policy Policy CF6 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.

The upgraded base station 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 UDP, the Digital Strategy, the Infrastructure Framework and the 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, reminders to take medicines, make appointments 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, Local Industrial Strategy and the 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. Greater Manchester is fully committed to being a smart city region and being a world-leading digital city region, as highlighted in the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Infrastructure Framework and Local Industrial Strategy. As such it needs the 21st century infrastructure to enable this objective to become a reality. An upgraded installation in this location enabling 5G service provision to the Rochdale area will ensure that this aspiration is fully met.

Mobiles can only work with a network of base stations in place where people want to use their mobile phones or other wireless devices. Without base stations, the mobile phones and other devices we rely on simply won't work.

The Councillor'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.

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 114 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.

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The proposed upgrade of the existing site will fill the current gap in the latest high quality 5G service provision and enable VMO2, Vodafone, and MVNOs who buy network space off them, 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.

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 both residents and businesses alike and an upgraded radio base station in this location providing the latest 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G technologies will support the Central and Local Government objectives to improve connectivity infrastructure to speed up economic and business growth.

The proposed upgrade of the existing 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.

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, including 5G, to high-speed data services.

The Code of Practice acknowledges that upgrading and improving mobile networks will not be possible without the necessary infrastructure on which we rely. With increasing consumer demand and the Government's aspirations for high quality communications infrastructure it is ever more important to improve connectivity and capacity.

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.

Economic and Social Benefits

The NPPF strongly supports sustainable development, as does the authority's UDP Policy CF6 and the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, Infrastructure Framework, Local Industrial Strategy and the Digital Blueprint. 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

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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 the Rochdale UDP, the Rochdale Core strategy, and the Greater Manchester aims, to minimise the effects of climate change reducing the need to travel and therefore the carbon footprint.

In such instances, as described above, the NPPF support 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 and local policy objective. Continuing to transform the digital connectivity of the area to drive economic growth and innovation, working to meet national targets of full roll-out of 5G technology and that all populated areas are connected to the 5G network by 2030, will ensure economic growth and social well-being.

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. This is in full accordance with the aims of Rochdale UDP, the Greater Manchester LIS, the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, and the Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, all of which aspire to improve connectivity and access to enhanced 4G/new 5G services across the city region.

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 will help this area of Rochdale comply with the aims and objectives of the relevant Greater Manchester strategies and plans outlined above.

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

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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.

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 enhanced 3G and 4G coverage and capacity and new 5G service provision in this area will fully meet paragraph 38 of the NPPF, to develop the best in class digital infrastructure to underpin the efficient functioning and growth of the regional economy, and identify opportunities to improve and accelerate the roll out of fibre, 4G and 5G technologies to accelerate business opportunities and growth to gain regional competitive advantage.

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.

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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.

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 prosperity 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 proposed upgrade will fully support these national 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.

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- 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.

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 Rochdale, as well as providing 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 upgrade the existing site in this area to provide enhanced 2G, 3G, 4G and new 5G service for VMO2 and Vodafone is significant.

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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 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

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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connects us more important than ever. That's why it is at the top of the government's agenda..."

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

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

...The Government is committed to extending mobile network coverage across the 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.

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

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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 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.

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In the recent Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill⁴, which set out “12 bold, national missions” which will be given legal status, Mission 4 is:

“By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for most of the population”.

It highlights the important benefits that high quality, reliable connectivity can provide, particularly in rural areas. It states:

“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.”

The proposed upgrade of the existing installation in this location will allow the operator to provide 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'. This fully meets the aspirations of the NPPF, the Rochdale UDP, the Rochdale Core Strategy, the Greater Manchester LIS, the Greater Manchester Digital Strategy, the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework, and the Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint.

The proposed upgrade 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 4G license obligations and the Council's 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 principle of the telecommunications development on the rooftop of Moss Mill Industrial Estate has already been considered acceptable by the Council. Telecommunications equipment has been in place on the rooftop for a number of years and become an established part of the streetscene. The rooftop currently hosts equipment for several mobile network operators and it is the obvious sequential choice for an upgrade in this area of Rochdale. The proposed additions to the existing site are essential and will enhance the customer experience for VMO2 and Vodafone to ensure that both operators' customers are able to continue to utilise their handheld devices for the purposes in which they were purchased, whilst also enabling new 5G provision to be provided.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

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On balance, the replacement and additional equipment including the 7.5m stub tower proposed on the rooftop will not have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding streetscene. The additional antennas and ancillary development will provide enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity for VMO2 and Vodafone to the surrounding area, and new 5G coverage for both operators, thus providing a high-quality service to its customers and access to the latest technologies whenever and wherever they are. Any limited harm will be outweighed by the benefits associated with providing and maintaining the latest high-quality communications in line with NPPF and the Governments strong commitment to be a world leader in 5G.

Site selection was progressed in accordance with the applicant's licence obligations, advice in the NPPF and the Code of Practice and represents the least environmentally intrusive, technically suitable, available option. In this case it was possible to upgrade an existing site, utilising an existing building, which fully complies with the sequential approach.

As this is a prior approval application, the Government confirms that this is permitted development, akin to outline planning permission, with just the finer details of siting and appearance to be considered by the local planning authority.

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

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Confirmation that submitted drawings have been checked for accuracy

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Signed:	<i>Michal Laskowski</i>	Date:	12/07/2023
Position:	Town Planner	(on behalf of Cornerstone)	

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