

UPGRADE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATION

FOR
MBNL & EE LIMITED

At
Existing Mast
Newton Street
Rochdale
OL16 5LG

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

February 2023

Prepared By
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MBNL/EE REF: Cell Number 15356

1. Introduction

This statement is in support of a Prior Approval Application in respect of a proposed upgrade of an existing base station installation. The upgrade is such that it is necessary to revise the existing headframe and add antennas, although the changes are relatively modest.

2. The Proposal

This scheme plans an upgrade of an existing base station, by way of installing additional antennas and revising the existing headframe arrangements. The requirement is primarily driven by the need to deploy updated coverage and capacity, principally across 3G and 4G services.

3. The Application Site

The existing apparatus within the area off Newton Street has been in place for some time and is an established telecommunications installation. The existing column supports a significant amount of telecommunications equipment, and this scheme represents an essential revision.

4. Pre-Application Consultation

Given that this is a simple upgrade of an existing installation, it was not considered that any pre-application consultation was necessary.

5. Application Background

The existing site and installation have been established for some years. As above, the site has been utilised for telecommunications purposes for some significant time, but it is now necessary to plan an upgrade in order to ensure there is updated coverage and capacity.

6. The Need for the Proposal

This scheme represents an essential upgrade of an existing site in order to provide improved capacity, coverage and to expand EE's services. This can be done by way of installing additional antennas. This is clearly preferable to the deployment of an additional site or installation.

7. Site Search/Alternatives Discounted

As this is an upgrade of an existing installation, no alternative sites were realistically considered. Upgrading an existing installation is preferable to the alternative of seeking to deploy an additional site or installation.

8. Design Statement

The scheme meets all relevant criteria and guidance on design in that it seeks to upgrade an existing installation by way of a revised headframe arrangement, together with additional antennas, and which sits within an established, partially screened environment. This minimises impact, while at the same time complying with the operators technical and operational constraints.

The site has hosted telecommunications equipment for EE for many years, and it is well established for that purpose. The site accommodates a telecommunications mast, located within a partially screened area, adjacent to Newton Street. The slimline mast accommodates a range

of antennas, and the site itself houses plant and equipment associated with the mast and antennas.

The principal headframe arrangement requires to be modified in order to expand and improve 3G and 4G services; it is necessary to add 3 no. antennas, so that all network requirements can be satisfied. However, the visual changes to the structure are fairly modest, and while the headframe and antenna arrangements are different, these are not substantially so, and the established location, with some modest tree screening, should ensure that there is minimal impact on the local area.

9. Access Statement

Radio base stations are not designed to be accessible by the public. Therefore, no specific public access provisions are required to be incorporated into the design of the proposal.

10. Health and Safety

We would remind the Council that the Government has set out its clear view on the issue of health and perceived view of health risks in paragraph 118 of the NPPF:

“Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure..”

As above, and included within this application, EE have confirmed this installation will be fully ICNIRP compliant.

11. Planning Policy Framework/Development Plan Policy

National Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The main thrust of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In general terms in respect of telecommunications the guidance aims to promote sustainable transport (including the need to travel), build a strong and competitive economy, and seeks to secure high quality design.

Specifically, the NPPF advises that advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services. The numbers of radio and telecommunications masts should be kept to a minimum and, where new sites are required, equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate (paragraphs 114 and 115).

The NPPF advises specifically that local planning authorities should not seek to prevent competition between operators, and must determine applications on planning grounds (paragraph 118).

It is considered the proposed development complies with the broad aims of the NPPF. It assists in the aim to keep the number of installations to a minimum, by providing enhanced coverage and capacity from an existing installation. The equipment has been sympathetically designed and it would enhance the provision of local community facilities and services.

In addition, the Code of Practice for Wireless Network Development in England (March 2022) also emphasises the government's commitment to improved communications infrastructure and coverage. Relevant extracts from this document are as follows:

2. 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.

8. Digital connectivity is vital to enable people to stay connected and businesses to grow. Fast, reliable digital connectivity can deliver economic, social and well-being benefits for the whole of the UK.

9. As the demand for mobile data in the United Kingdom is increasing rapidly, it is important that everyone has access to dependable and consistent mobile coverage where they live, work and travel.

10. The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) and the National Infrastructure Strategy set out the government's long-term strategy for meeting its digital connectivity targets and delivering high quality, reliable digital infrastructure that works across the UK

11. The government has committed to extending mobile coverage across the UK. The government's Levelling Up White Paper has set a mission that the UK will have nationwide 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population by 2020. In support of this, the government and the UK's mobile network operators agreed a £1 billion Shared Rural Network deal to extend 4G mobile geographical coverage to 95% of the UK by the end of the programme.

13. The planning system plays a key role 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.

15. Section 10 of the NPPF sets out the planning policies for communications development in England, and states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The NPPF also sets out that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technologies (such as 5G)

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

64. All wireless network installations are principally guided by the technical need for the site and the technical constraints placed upon transmitting a signal. The siting and design of such installations must therefore be balanced between visual impact and these needs and constraints. As set out in the siting and design section above, the three primary technical and operational considerations for installation sites are: ensuring that wireless infrastructure provides an appropriate level of coverage over the intended geographical area; ensuring that sites have sufficient capacity to meet user demand; and, requiring a connection to the wider network 'backhaul'

It is our view that this particular scheme falls squarely in line with the above guidance and policy

The importance of improved connectivity

Digital connectivity, whether through mobile or fixed connections to the internet, is now thought of as a vital utility, and improving that connectivity, and its scope, is essential.

In September 2019, the Local Government Association published 'A councillor's guide to digital connectivity', and the following is from one of the opening paragraphs:

"With better access to high speed and reliable broadband and mobile connections, local communities can access public services more conveniently and purchase goods online at a lower cost. People can work from home, cutting out their commute and improving their quality of life. Businesses can grow, become more productive, sell their products in a global market and access a raft of services not available to those offline. Tourists can find out more information about local attractions and share photographs of their experiences with friends and on social media. In contrast, areas stuck in the digital slow lane are less attractive places to live, work and visit, and risk being left behind as other areas reap the benefits of our digital revolution"

Reports and Reviews

A number of reports and reviews over the last few years, has highlighted the importance of improved connectivity, and its place in creating a more prosperous and resilient society and economy. Links to a number of these are detailed below:

Councils and Connectivity 2 – A report by Building Mobile Britain and Mobile UK, May 2019

https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5b7ab54b285dec5c113ee24d/5d5551f8548be4063cdbce01_69034%20%E2%80%93%20Mobile%20UK%20%E2%80%93%20Councils%20and%20Connectivity%202_web_ready.FINAL.pdf

Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review – Published by DCMS, July 2018

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732496/Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732496/Future_Telecoms_Infrastructure_Review.pdf)

The Statement of Strategic Priorities for telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum, and postal services – Updated and published by DCMS October 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statement-of-strategic-priorities>

Matt Warman's Keynote Speech at Connected Britain 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/matt-warman-keynote-speech-at-connected-britain-2020>

Development Plan Policy

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

For the purposes of Section 70, most relevant to the proposal is the Rochdale Core Strategy of 2016, and any remaining applicable policies from the original UDP of 2006.

The original UDP of 2006 contains policies that are still relevant in some cases, but the Core strategy deleted the original Telecoms policy, CF/6.

Within the Core Strategy, the only applicable information in relation to telecoms proposals, is Policy E2:

E2 - Increasing jobs and prosperity....

- *Promote the delivery of infrastructure, such as improved transport, housing, education, energy (including decentralised energy networks), water and wastewater, and information and communications technology (including high speed broadband) with a focus on supporting economic development*

Although not yet in force, we are aware of the Joint Development Plan Document – Places For Everyone – produced jointly by Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan Councils. This was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 14 February 2022. It includes the following:

Objective 9

Ensure access to physical and social infrastructure.

We will:

Ensure that our communities and businesses are supported by infrastructure; Improve the capacity and network coverage of digital, energy, telecoms, transport and water in key growth locations

Policy JP-C 2

Digital Connectivity

We support the provision of affordable, high quality, digital infrastructure. Developers are expected to work and share costs with telecoms operators as appropriate to maximise coverage and enable consumers to make informed choices. It is expected that internet connections will work immediately when residents move into new properties.

In making decisions we will support a range of measures, including:

- 1. Enabling the roll-out of latest generation mobile technology and full fibre to the premises connectivity, in a way that maximises coverage whilst protecting townscape quality and ensuring an ability to respond to updated/changing technology*

Overall, it is considered the proposal complies with both national and local policy. In terms of national policy, the proposal is sympathetically considered, it minimises the number of installations and has a high quality of design. It would enhance the provision of local community facilities and services.

12. Conclusions

There is a requirement for EE to provide enhanced and improved network coverage and capacity in this locality, together with the need to provide for expanded services, principally in relation to 3G and 4G services. Network planners have identified a need for improved and extended coverage and the proposed development will address this identified need and continued requirement in line with their licence requirement and customer demands.

National planning policy is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems, and operators have obligations to meet customer demands for improved quality of service. This application demonstrates the technical need for the installation to provide improved customer service.

In terms of design, scale and layout, it is considered that the proposal responds positively to the character, appearance and variety of the local environment and will not have an adverse impact on the application site or the surrounding area. The upgrade is of a high standard, maintaining the visual and environmental character of the area.

The telecommunications infrastructure proposed in this application has been designed using appropriate techniques and sited, having regard to technical, engineering and land use planning considerations, in order to minimise its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal represents an appropriate siting and design solution for this locality, balancing environmental and planning considerations.

PLEASE NOTE OTHER DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED WITH THIS APPLICATION AS FOLLOWS:

Supplementary Information Form

ICNIRP Compliance Certificate

Planning Drawings