

SITE SPECIFIC SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
1. Site Details

Site Name:	NORTH MANCHESTER GOLF CLUB GF	Site Address:	NORTH MANCHESTER GOLF CLUB, MANCHESTER OLD ROAD, MIDDLETON, ROCHDALE, GREATER MANCHESTER, M24 4PE
NGR:	E:386289 N:406138		
Site Ref Number:	VM02 103600	Site Type: Macro	GF – Macro

2. Pre-Application Check List
Site Selection

Was an LPA mast register used to check for suitable sites by the operator or the LPA?	Yes	
If no explain why: N/A		
Was the industry site database checked for suitable sites by the operator:	Yes	
If no explain why: N/A		

Pre-application consultation with LPA

Written offer of pre-application consultation:	Yes
Was there pre-application contact:	Yes
Date of pre-application contact:	14 th of May 2025
Name of contact:	Nick Brookman Senior Planning Officer

Summary of outcome/Main issues raised:

Prior to submission, the applicant initiated a pre application discussion with Rochdale Borough Council. The Officers concluding comments are below:

"Officers acknowledge that the requirement for enhancing electronic communication infrastructure and 'levelling up' digital connectivity must be balanced against the requirement for equipment to be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Having regard to all relevant considerations, including national planning policy and the potential availability of alternative sites, it is considered that the benefits of the installation in terms of the enhancement of the telecommunications network, including its contribution to economic growth and the operational and locational needs of the operators are significant. For this reason, the proposed development could be supported in this location subject to satisfactorily addressing concerns and impacts on biodiversity.

Officers also acknowledge that a balance must be struck between the importance of telecommunications infrastructure and the need of the proposed development. In this instance, owing to the location of the proposed development and subject to the retention of existing trees, the appearance of the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

There is evidently a significant need for the proposed infrastructure in this location and Officers are satisfied by the evidence provided that the proposed development would assist in meeting the additional coverage required which would inevitably deliver significant public benefits.

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed development would comply with Policies P1, P3 and DM1 of the Rochdale CS, Policy JP-P1 and JP-C2 of the Places for Everyone JDP, and the NPPF."

This pre application feedback reinforces the acceptability of the scheme in terms of siting and appearance.

In the pre application feedback, the Department requested the following supporting documentation:

- Location Plan to scale 1:1250 showing the direction of north, with the application site clearly edged in red, **Submitted**
- Existing and Proposed site plans to scale 1:200/1:500; **Submitted**
- Proposed Elevations in full to scale 1:100/1:50; **Submitted**
- Existing and Proposed Street Scene Drawings to scale 1:100/1:50; **Submitted**
- Proposed Boundary Treatment Elevations in full to scale 1:100/1:50; **Submitted**
- Design and Access Statement; **Included as part of the Site Specific Supplementary Information Template**
- Planning Statement; (could be incorporated into the Design and Access Statement). **Included as part of the Site Specific Supplementary Information Template**
- Landscaping proposals; **Submitted**
- Ecology appraisal and any other surveys as required such as bat and bird survey; **PEA and Ground Level Tree Assessment (to assess impacts on bats/birds) Submitted**

- Biodiversity Net Gain Statement/justification; Email from Mr. Nick Brookman confirming BNG is not required as it is exempt through permitted development.
- Biodiversity Metric; Email from Mr. Nick Brookman confirming BNG is not required as it is exempt through permitted development.
- Tree Survey and Arboriculture Impact Assessment; Tree Survey and Arboriculture Impact Assessment Submitted
- Construction Management Plan. To be submitted

Ten Commitments Consultation

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model:			Green
Outline of consultation carried out: Middleton Ward Councillors: Patricia.Dale@Rochdale.Gov.UK june.west@rochdale.gov.uk peter.williams@rochdale.gov.uk MP: Graham Stringer MP: graham.stringer.mp@parliament.uk Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce: info@gmchamber.co.uk North Manchester Golf Club admin@nmgc.co.uk Local Residents			
Summary of outcome/Main issues raised: No response has been received.			

School/College

Location of site in relation to school/college: There are no schools in close proximity to the site.
Outline of consultation carried out with school/college: N/A
Summary of outcome/Main issues raised: N/A

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: N/A		

Developer's Notice

Copy of Developer's Notice enclosed?	Yes	
Date served:	12 th June 2025	

3. Proposed Development

The proposed site:
This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Jet Network Solutions and VMO2 in support of a proposed telecommunications installation intended to address a critical gap in network coverage within the Middleton area. The proposal forms part of a targeted network improvement programme aimed at enhancing existing 4G service and introducing 5G capability to meet rising consumer demand and resolve a significant local service deficiency. The proposed structure has been specifically designed to support infrastructure sharing, allowing for future accommodation of additional mobile network operators. This aligns with national planning

policy objectives and the Government's digital connectivity strategy, which promotes shared infrastructure to improve efficiency and minimise environmental impact.

The principal aim of the development is to re-establish and enhance VMO2's mobile coverage, which has been substantially reduced since 2022. Network performance data confirms a marked shortfall in 4G provision across this part of Middleton, with extensive areas currently receiving the lowest levels of service.

Site Location

Middleton is a town situated in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, within Greater Manchester. Located on the River Irk, it lies approximately 5 miles southwest of Rochdale and the same distance northeast of Manchester city center. As recorded in the 2011 Census, Middleton had a population of 42,972. The town is situated on the northern edge of Manchester, bordered by Blackley to the south and Moston to the southeast.

Middleton encompasses a diverse mix of high-density urban development, suburban neighborhoods, and semi-rural environments. However, the town center and surrounding areas are primarily characterised by urban land use.

The proposed site is located to the northwest of Middleton centre, within the grounds of North Manchester Golf Club. It benefits from a relatively discreet setting, surrounded immediately by mature tree coverage forming part of the golf course landscape. In the broader context, residential



terraced properties lie to the north, while the golf course continues to the south and west. Further residential development is located to the east of the site.

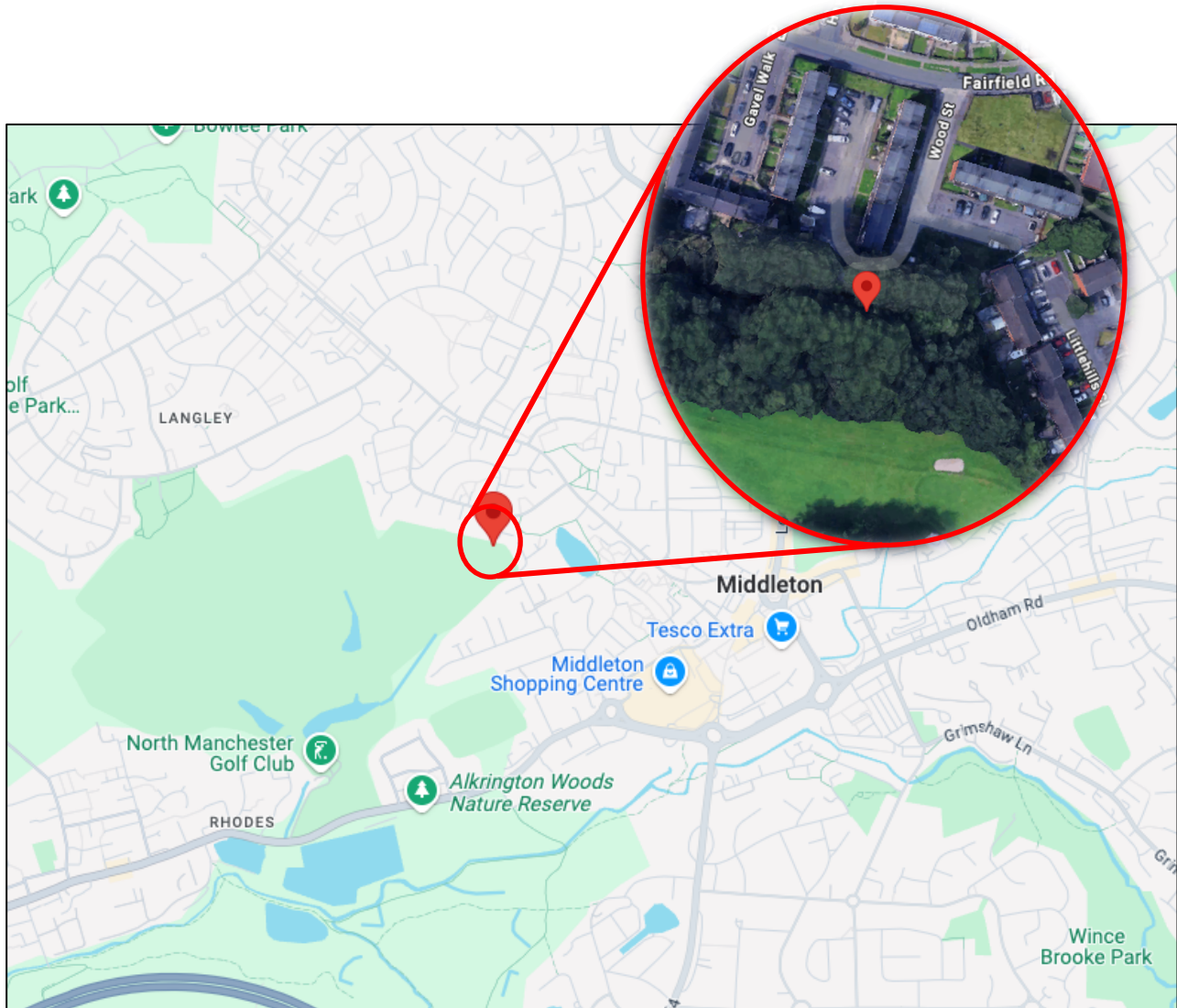


Figure 1: Site Location (Source: Google Maps)



Figure 2: Site Location (Source: Google Maps)

Enclose map showing the cell centre and adjoining cells:

As part of VM02s continued network improvement program, there is a specific requirement for base station installation at this location to improve coverage to the area. Currently, VM02 customers have little to no coverage in this area since 2022, therefore there is a growing demand on the operator to reintroduce and improve coverage in the area. The lack of 4G coverage is shown below in Figure 1, whereby the red dots represent areas which have the “worst” 4G coverage. This demonstrates that VM02 have an evident need to fill in this hole with improved 4G coverage.

In addition, a search of the industry database confirmed that there is no 5G coverage for any of the 4no Operators (EE, VM02, Three or Vodafone). As a result, the structure has been designed to potentially support 5G infrastructure for all four operators. This proposed installation will therefore provide an opportunity for the Middleton area to benefit from new 5G coverage.

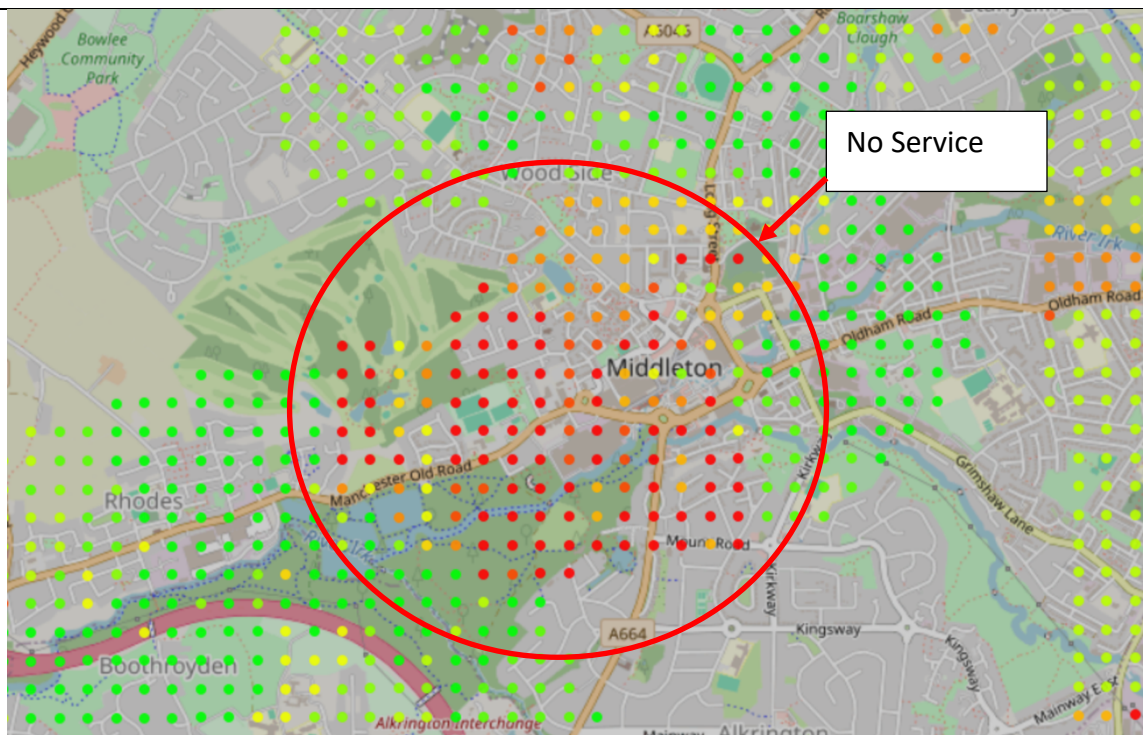


Figure 3: VM02 4G Coverage in Middleton (Source: Mastadata, 2025)

Type of Structure	
Description:	
The proposed development consists of a new 30m high lattice tower, 6no antennas, 4no dishes, 1no equipment cabinet, 1no shared meter cabinets and ancillary development throughout. For full details, please refer to the enclosed drawing package.	
Overall Height: +30.0m AGL	
Height of existing building	N/A
Equipment Housing:	
Length:	See drawings
Width:	See drawings
Height:	See drawings
Materials	
Tower/mast etc – type of material and external colour:	Lattice tower coloured camouflage
Equipment housing – type of material and external colour:	Galvanised camouflage
Reasons for choice of design:	

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages site sharing and the efficient use of telecommunications infrastructure. However, within the defined search area, there are no sequentially preferable or suitable alternative locations. The main purposes of the installation is to enhance VMO2 coverage and introduce new 5G coverage to the region, while providing a structure capable of being shared by all 4no main operators. Currently, VM02 customers have little to no coverage in this area since 2022, therefore there is a growing demand on the operator to reintroduce and improve coverage in the area.

The proposed development consists of a new 30m high lattice tower, 6no antennas, 4no dishes, 1no equipment cabinet, 1no shared meter cabinets and ancillary development throughout.

The height of the lattice tower at 30 metres is the minimum height required to provide high-quality 4G and 5G coverage to the intended target area. If the mast height were any lower, it would not be able to provide sufficient coverage to the target coverage area. 5G radio technologies operate in higher frequency bands than older technologies and these higher frequencies naturally result in more signal loss and greater interference from obstacles therefore it will normally require a higher structure to achieve the same coverage footprint. As a result, 5G requires taller structures to achieve the same level of coverage. To improve data speeds and capacity for users, antennas are typically mounted higher than traditional ones. This is why a 30-meter mast is essential for providing effective 5G coverage in the area.

RRUs, located approximately 28.25 m above ground, are compact (roughly the size of a shoebox) and are integral to improving antenna efficiency. Their elevated position means they will have minimal visual impact and reduce the need for additional ground-level equipment, helping to limit clutter.

The applicant offers a design and appearance which we believe minimises the overall visual impact of the development, the lattice type mast offers a permeable structure which itself reduces the prominence of the mast. This form of structure, augmented by a camouflage colour, will further reduce the overall visual impact of the development. The visual impact is further alleviated by the existence of natural topographical features of the land, offering a rising backdrop to the development. Views from road networks are transient in nature and are therefore considered less sensitive than fixed point views. The site is proposed to be located within a cluster of trees on the northern section of the Golf Club. These features further aid integration of the development, ensuring the mast and associated equipment do not dominate the surrounding landscape.

The Operator has given careful consideration to the design, opting for the lattice structure which is capable of supporting current and future technologies and to to consolidate elements of site sharing into one location while minimising visual and environmental impact. This design will therefore inevitably require a larger headframe, however the benefit of this is that the structure can be shared, therefore reducing the need for additional installations throughout the area. This therefore conforms to the NPPF in that it avoids the proliferation of masts.

The closest residential properties are those on Wood Street, however the orientation of the dwellings, away from the mast will ensure that any views are oblique and will not have an unacceptable impact on their amenity.

In summary, this proposal represents the most efficient, least visually intrusive solution for delivering critical 4G improvements and new 5G coverage. It reflects a carefully considered approach to site selection, design, and environmental integration, and responds appropriately to both national planning guidance and the Operator's legal obligations to provide robust, modern communications infrastructure.

4. Technical Information

ICNIRP Declaration attached	Yes	
ICNIRP 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 the site are taken into account.		

5. Technical Justification

Reason(s) why site required
Under the terms of its licence, Virgin Media O2 Limited (VM02) are required to meet strict coverage obligations, ensuring that the benefits of mobile connectivity are extended to all communities, including those currently underserved. The NPPF makes it clear that local authorities should not question the need for telecommunications services, nor seek to restrict competition between operators. Nonetheless, the Applicant considers it helpful to set out the technical rationale for this proposal and explain how the site fits within the broader network strategy. This installation is required to provide improved 4G coverage and brand new 5G coverage for VM02 in the Middleton, addressing existing gaps in service and improving overall network performance in the locality. This area of Middleton has been without VM02 coverage since 2022, and the applicant has attempted on a number of occasions to reinstate this coverage, however all attempts have failed. Therefore, this installation is critical to filling in this gap in coverage. Mobile base stations operate by transmitting radio signals that connect mobile devices to the wider network, allowing users to make calls, send texts, stream content, and access data services. These base stations are linked together—via fibre or wireless links—to form an interconnected network. Each base station serves a defined area known as a cell, and these cells overlap with adjacent ones to create seamless coverage. The size and shape of each cell can vary depending on local conditions, such as topography, building density, and user demand.

As low-powered radio transmitters, base stations have a limited effective range and must be located within or close to the areas they are designed to serve. Relocating the installation too far from the intended coverage area risks leaving parts of Northolt without essential mobile services. For this reason, the proposed location has been carefully selected to ensure the required coverage objectives can be achieved efficiently and effectively.

6. Site Selection Process – alternative sites considered and not chosen

Discounted Options

In seeking to meet growing network demand in the Middleton area, the Operator's acquisition and survey agents have made every effort to identify a site that minimises any potential impact on the character of the area. However, in order to effectively deliver improved mobile services, it is essential that the communications site is located as close as possible to the area of customer demand.

In line with the sequential site selection process outlined in the NPPF, the following criteria were followed when identifying a suitable location:

- a) *Mast and Site Sharing*
- b) *Use of Existing Buildings or Structures*
- c) *New Ground-Based Installation*

As required by the Operator's licence and consistent with national planning guidance, the first preference was to utilise existing telecommunications infrastructure where it represented the most environmentally sensitive solution. The Ofcom Site Finder register was consulted to identify potential mast-sharing opportunities.

However, no suitable existing telecommunications sites were identified that could accommodate the extent of equipment required for this proposal. Existing base stations in nearby areas were discounted due to their proximity to each other, which would result in significant overlap in coverage and fail to address the specific network demand in Middleton. Additionally, this would risk creating radio frequency interference, and the site would be too distant from the area experiencing poor service.

The local urban environment presented further constraints. The area is predominantly comprised of low-rise, pitched-roof residential properties, which are unsuitable for rooftop installations due to limited height, lack of structural capacity, and poor lines of sight. Furthermore, the narrow footpaths, dense development, and complex underground services significantly limit the feasibility of installing ground-based equipment in most locations.

Rooftop solutions were assessed but ruled out due to the lack of flat-roofed commercial buildings of sufficient height, structural capability, or appropriate siting within the defined search area. The general roofscape consists primarily of domestic, pitched roofs, which do not meet the technical requirements for accommodating the necessary infrastructure.



The proposed site in North Manchester Golf Course was therefore selected after a thorough investigation of alternative locations. It represents the most viable option when balancing technical requirements, environmental impact, and planning policy considerations.

A detailed list of alternative sites considered is provided below, with reasons for their exclusion in favour of the proposed site.



Site	Address	NGR	Reason for discounting
D1 - RT	Middleton Shopping Centre, Middleton, Manchester M24 4EL	E: 386695 N: 405800	The rooftop location at Middleton Shopping was considered for suitability. It was considered that in order to achieve sufficient 5G coverage to the target area, a stub tower, of significant height, weight and massing would be required to achieve the operators' technical requirements. This may have. A greater visual impact on the area than the proposed site. In addition to this, progressing a site at this location would likely take a number of years before it could become operational, as the owner of the building



			would not be willing to host the equipment. As a result, a site with a willing land owner and less of a visual impact was progressed, as this would ensure improved 4G and new 5G coverage could be provided in the area.
D2 - RT	Tesco Extra, Barton Road, Middleton centre Shopping, Wood Side, Middleton, M24 1HB	E: 387131 N: 405848	A site on this roof top was considered for suitability, however the only space structurally capable of hosting the equipment was on the south eastern site of the roof, as the remainder of the roof is constructed of corrugated steel. The infrastructure associated with telecommunications installation would carry significant weight, height and massing, thus requiring more roof space than other roof top installation. They are to the south east of the roof already hosts various apparatus associated with the running of Tesco Extra, with no space for a telecommunications stub tower. As a result, this site has been discounted due to its inability to host the equipment
D3 - RT	Middleton Arena, LCpl Joel Halliwell VC Way, Wood Side, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 1AG	E: 387156 N: 405889	A rooftop installation requires a flat roof, with sufficient roof space and of a suitable construction to host a stub tower, equipment's cabinets and ancillary equipment. Whilst this building is of a sufficient height to host the equipment, it's roof shape is curved, this unsuitable for telecommunications installation. In addition, the roof top is also occupied by a vast array of solar panels, thus there is insufficient room to host the equipment.
D4 – RT	Warwick Mill, Middleton, M24 1LU	E: 387135 N: 405712	A new site on the Warwick Mill has been explored, however there are a number of constraints attached to it. The Mill is a listed building, therefore a 5G telecommunications installation, of significant height, weight and massing may not be accepted on the roof top location. In addict, there is currently planning permission for the conversion of this mill into 135no apartments and demolition of London house to erect 146no apartments. The proposed roof plan shows a resident's terrace and flat roof/green roof area on the 8th floor and residential accommodation on the night floor thus a telecommunications installation may result in ICNIRP compliance issues. As a result, a site on this tall building has been discounted due to the sensitive status of the building, and live permission which may result in ICNIRP compliance issues.



D5 - SW	Manchester Old Road, Wood Side, Middleton, Rochdale, Greater Manchester,	E: 386562 N: 405671	A site on the junction of Cheetham Street and Manchester Old Road has been reviewed, due to its widened footpath, however, has been discounted as it would result in visibility issues for road users manoeuvring this junction. In addition, this site is close to a War Memorial, therefore it was considered inappropriate to site a base station installation in such a sensitive location.
D6 - SW	Middleton Trade Park, Manchester New Road, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 1QJ	E: 386968 N: 405575	This site was previously considered twice by the Local Planning Authority, and on both occasions was refused due to the significant scale, siting and appearance of the development. There are no alternative design options available to the operator which would achieve the required level of coverage, whilst being considered acceptable by the Planning Department. As a result, it has been discounted due to planning concerns.
D7- SW	Wood Street Carpark, Wood Street, Wood Side, Middleton, M24 4SZ	E: 386823 , N: 406035	A ground base station in the car park located at the junction of Wood Street and Eastway was considered for suitability. This site has however been discounted for a number of reasons. First of all, the site is in full view of the front facing windows the bungalow dwellings to the south west on Whitaker St, as well as rear facing habitable windows of the 2-storey terraced dwellings on Milton Street. As a result, a telecommunications mast within this car park would have a significantly greater impact on visual amenity, compared to the proposed site. In addition to this, due to the drop in levels of the car park with the surrounding buildings and trees, a tower of significant height would be required to provide sufficient coverage to the target area. As a result, this site has been discounted due to the visual impact it would have on surrounding properties, as well as lack of coverage it achieves.
D8 - GF	Adj. to Wood Street Play Park, Wood Street, Wood Side, Middleton, M24 4BR	E: 386510 N: 406318	This site was investigated due to its ability to achieve the required coverage and suitable build conditions. However, this site was discounted as it was located adjacent to a public footpath, and in a highly visible location along Wood Street, particular for those nearby residential properties. The proposal is also located within close proximity to a public play park,

			therefore it was considered unsuitable for a telecommunications installation.
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If no alternative site options have been investigated, please explain why:

N/A

7. Additional Relevant Information

Environmental information:

The site has been accompanied by an preliminary ecological assessment, tree survey, arboriculture impact assessment, and a ground level tree assessment to assess impact on bats.

These accompanying reports confirm that there is no adverse impact on the environment.

The PEA requested a further survey in the form of a phase 2 botany survey. This report will accompany this submission as soon as it is recieved.

Land use planning designations:

The application site is located within the defined Urban Area as defined on the Councils UDP Proposals Map under Policy G/D/1. The site is also a designated Greenspace Corridor and an area of protected recreational open space.

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

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that any alteration to the landscape (regardless of its function as telecommunications infrastructure) will inevitably be noticeable to nearby residents and frequent passers-by. However, visibility alone, or the siting and appearance of a development, does not inherently equate to significant or unacceptable harm.

When assessing the suitability of telecommunications development proposals, it is essential that decision-makers prioritise telecommunications-specific planning policy where such policy exists. In the absence of up-to-date or locally relevant guidance, the provisions of the NPPF must take precedence. It is also important to recognise that it would be unreasonable to expect specialised infrastructure, such as telecommunications equipment, to fully conform to general planning policy criteria that are not tailored to its unique requirements.

The following section sets out the planning policy and guidance considered relevant to this application.

Local Guidance

Rochdale Council does not have detailed adopted planning guidance for telecommunications development, however there are policies which seek to promote the delivery of infrastructure, including information and communications technology:

Policy E2 – Increasing Jobs and Prosperity (Rochdale Core Strategy):

“promote the delivery of infrastructure, such as [...] information and communications technology (including high speed broadband)”

Policy JP-C2 – Digital Connectivity (Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan)

“We support the provision of affordable, high quality, digital infrastructure. 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;*
2. *Requiring all new development to have full fibre to premises connections, unless technically infeasible and/or unviable, and to incorporate multiple ducting compliant with telecoms standards, to facilitate future-proof gigabit capable network connections. It is expected that internet connections will be operational and immediately accessible to network providers when occupiers move into new properties and*
3. *Facilitating the provision of free, secure, high speed public wi-fi connections, particularly in the most frequented areas.”*

National Planning Guidance

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.”*

Planning Policy is provided at the national level by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is a material consideration in planning decisions. The following points are highlighted and commented against.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Paragraph 8 states: *'Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives are interdependent and need to be pushed in mutually supportive ways*

- *An economic objective – to help build strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring the sufficient land the right types are available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure*
- *A social objective - Support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring the at a sufficient number and range of homes can be provides to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-deigned, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.*
- *An environmental objective - Protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy. The proposed development accords with all these aspects of the NPPF in that it will provide improved network provision within this area bringing a range of associated economic and technical benefits.*

Chapter 10 of the NPPF promotes the development of telecommunication infrastructure but advises that best practice is applied to reduce the proliferation of installations.

Paragraph 119 states, *"Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections"*.

Paragraph 120 of the NPPF states, *"Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate"*.

Paragraph 121 states *"Local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new electronic communications development in certain areas. They should ensure that:*

- a) they have evidence to demonstrate that electronic communications infrastructure is not expected to cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest; and*
- b) they have considered the possibility of the construction of new buildings or other structures interfering with broadcast and electronic communications services"*

Paragraph 122 states *"Applications for electronic communications development (including applications for prior approval) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development.*

This should include:

- a) *the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college, or within a statutory safeguarding zone surrounding an aerodrome, technical site or military explosives storage area; and*
- b) *for an addition to an existing mast or base station, a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection; or*
- c) *for a new mast or base station, evidence that the applicant has explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure and a statement that self-certifies that, when operational, International Commission guidelines will be met"*

Paragraph 123 states "*Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure*".

In principle, the erection of a new telecommunications mast and associated infrastructure is acceptable, with clear reference to policies E1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and Policy JP-C2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the above paragraphs of the NPPF, subject to assessment of development management considerations as discussed in turn below.

The UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy

The UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy is a new policy framework to drive deployment and adoption of 5G and advanced wireless connectivity; and the government's 6G strategy for the UK.

It highlights the importance of connectivity to the UK and recognises that the UK needs world-class wireless connectivity:

"Connectivity has brought benefits for British households and British business, boosting growth, productivity, and opportunity for all. And change shows no sign of stopping. In fact, we find ourselves on the brink of a new revolution which promises to transform the world once more.

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



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

The power of 5G and future telecoms advances will unlock new solutions in everything from industry to healthcare. Falling behind in coverage will mean falling behind in international competitiveness when it comes to the technologies of tomorrow, and failing to provide British people with innovative, life-enhancing services on secure, resilient networks.”

The proposed telecommunication equipment will help promote The UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy by improving coverage and capacity, supporting digital inclusion, facilitating economic growth, and enabling future-proof infrastructure including 5G that will ensure the area doesn't fall behind in coverage and international competitiveness. The proposed development will provide significant public benefit with greater capacity and wireless connectivity for local businesses, residents, the nearby motorway and visitors to the area.

Recent news articles on lack of phone coverage in Middleton and Greater Manchester, reinforce the need for improved phone coverage:

The Bolton News– Greater Manchester ‘falling behind’ in rollout of 5G (18th May 2025)

“The Local Democracy Reporting Service recently visited Middleton – which has become a signal dead spot.

Locals have reported not being able to take phone calls and businesses said they’ve struggled to take card payments. The reason for these issues over the last three years is damage to the telecoms mast on top of Warwick Mill.

Many residents were baffled how a town six miles from Manchester city centre struggles to get mobile phone signal. They just want to be able to make calls and use the internet like everyone expects to do in 2025. Town centre resident Ashley Wakefield told the LDRS: “It can be a struggle to get 4G and ring people. I’m a foster carer, so it’s a real problem for me.

“There have been times I’ve had to go into the shopping centre to use the Wi-Fi to get my bus pass to work. It’s super inconvenient.

“It has been a big thing for a while and it’s spoken about a lot as an issue.”

So many people said they’d have trouble using their phones, but for businesses it is a bigger issue. Many people expect to use their bank cards for buying goods, but when the internet is needed to process the transactions, there are problems.



John Proctor, who works in Middleton, recalled: "I've had shopkeepers shouting me back saying it hasn't got through. He came up the road with the machine in his hand.

"It was embarrassing because I bought a mate a sandwich and it looked like I couldn't pay."

Ali Salam, who runs Yours Phone Shop on the high street, confirmed transactions for card payments can be a struggle.

The businessman said: "I've been told that the signal is a problem. Lots of people say it's because it's a hilly area here but there isn't a lot of info as to why it's a problem.

"If you ask 10 people about this, nine will be complaining. I get people asking to sort their phones as a result. Sometimes transactions are tricky for mobile banking."

BBC News – Vandals left town without mobile signal for years (11th May 2025)

""Residents who have struggled to get a good mobile phone signal in their town for three years have now learnt the issue was caused by vandalism of its local mast.

Some residents in Middleton, Greater Manchester, had assumed the lack of signal was "because it's a hilly area", according to local phone shop owner Ali Salam.

"If you ask 10 people about this, nine will be complaining," he said.

Following the scale of complaints by businesses and residents, local MP Elsie Blundell said she spent "several months" investigating the problem, adding that she found: "Vandalism by a small group of people had left an entire town at risk of being disconnected and losing mobile signal."

Damage to the mast at the top of the Warwick Mill premises in the town centre resulted in reduced coverage.

Ms Blundell said: "Obviously, I'm angry that some heartless vandals could do that to our town.

"More importantly, though, we needed to find a replacement soon to get the town working again.""

These articles highlight the pressing need to improve mobile phone coverage in Middleton, Greater Manchester. They also demonstrate clear and consistent support from local residents, businesses, and elected representatives for enhanced connectivity. Local MP Ms. Blundell has strongly emphasised the importance of delivering new telecommunications infrastructure in the area to restore reliable service and help the town function effectively once again.

Planning Assessment

In accordance with Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO), this development is to be assessed primarily in terms of its siting and appearance. While the provisions of the local development plan are not determinative, they remain material considerations where relevant to matters of design and visual impact. The key issues arising from this prior approval application are whether the proposed structure would appear visually intrusive or out of keeping with the character of the area, and whether any such impact would be outweighed by the substantial social and economic benefits associated with the deployment of 5G and the enhancement of next-generation digital infrastructure.

Siting

As outlined in the preceding sections of this report, there is an urgent need to provide coverage to Middleton. The siting of the installation requires a relatively small search area in order to achieve the required level of coverage to the target coverage area. Should the applicant be forced outside of the defined search area, this will only necessitate another installation to achieve the coverage, which would be contrary to the NPPF in terms of proliferation of masts.

It is important that the reader appreciates that it is almost impossible to introduce new infrastructural elements to any environment without some degree of impact. Indeed, with communications infrastructure, it is virtually impossible to physically enhance the setting in which it is located and more often than not, all that can be done is seek to limit impact to an absolute minimum through sensitive siting and design practices, as has been the case.

The site has been selected as it is located within the search area, therefore can achieve the required level of coverage, whilst being out of direct line of sight to any nearby properties therefore visual amenity is maintained. The proposed siting is location within a cluster of trees on the northern side of North Manchester Golf Club, therefore benefits from a degree of natural screening.

The proposed scheme will be most visible from short distance views on Fairfield Road and surrounding housing estates. Again, it is considered that due to the site careful positioning and away from direct line of sight of these properties, coupled with the retention of mature trees to augment screening ensure that any visual harm is mitigated.

The proposed scheme would cause little harm to the surrounding area. Any potential adverse impacts of allowing this scheme would not 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as whole'.

Visual appearance

The height of the tower at 30 metres is the minimum height required to provide high-quality 4G and 5G coverage to the intended target area. It is acknowledged that the development will be visible at close range and from surrounding vistas, however as mentioned above the views will be mitigated by the retention of existing trees and screening where possible.

The width of the tower is the slimmest width possible in order to accommodate the antennas. If the tower were any slimmer, then the equipment required would not be able to fit onto one tower, thus would require a bulkier additional headframe to support the apparatus which would lead to a more obtrusive and bulkier design, taller tower or another base station installation, which would lead to a proliferation of masts.

The colour of the mast is camouflage, which is considered to blend into the cluster of trees. While we are open to amending the colour at the request of the Planning Department, we consider the camouflage colour the most suitable for this location.

Regarding antenna design, it is technically essential that the latest 4G and 5G antennas remain unshrouded. Higher-frequency signals required for fast data transmission are unable to effectively propagate through materials such as Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP), which would be used in any shrouded enclosure. This limitation applies particularly to 5G but also affects advanced 4G antennas. Shrouding the antennas would compromise their performance, necessitating additional infrastructure elsewhere, again leading to a proliferation of masts.

The cabinets are designed to resemble other statutory operators' equipment cabinets and are commonly found within an urban environment. The equipment cabinets are situated within the proposed fenced compound and will not obstruct pedestrian or traffic flow. They are the minimum number required in order to provide improved 4G coverage to the area as well as 5G coverage.

In summary, the proposed design is the least visually intrusive whilst achieving the required level of continued coverage, providing brand new 5G coverage to the area (as well as improving the existing 4G coverage). As such the proposal development is sited and design to minimise the impact on the visual amenity, character and appearance of the surrounding areas. The structure makes the most of the existing screening and backdrops and is the minimum possible to be ICNIRP compliant, clear the urban clutter and for the antenna signal to reach the target coverage area. As a result, the proposed development fully accords NPPF by striking a balance between visual and amenity concerns with the operators technical requirements.

Residential Amenity

The nearest dwellings are located to the north, however there are no front facing windows with a direct or indirect view of the site so there is a minimal impact on the local residents. The 30-metre tower assimilates in with the existing surroundings, and therefore this siting is appropriate for telecommunications development.

There is limited potential to provide the installation elsewhere, due to the highly restricted nature of the search area. The evidence indicates that there is no other more appropriate location for the proposal that would be away from residences.

In line with NPPF, the proposed installation is an item of essential infrastructure and

therefore, will not cause any loss of privacy nor will any occupants of nearby properties be overlooked. The tower and antennas do not emit any noise, odour, vibration, artificial light, or disturbance from air. The only noise emitted is from a cooling fan within the equipment cabinets, which only operate during hot weather conditions. However, within a few meters the noise is inaudible, particularly when considering the ambient noise levels of the industrial area and nearby motorway traffic. Maintenance of the equipment cabinets is usually once a year, where the engineer can walk to site with handheld tools.

For these reasons, it's considered the siting and appearance of the development would have satisfactory effects on the living conditions of occupiers of nearby residences in terms of outlook.

Conclusion

To conclude, there is a chronic lack of mobile phone coverage in Middleton. This has been illustrated throughout this report and wider news articles. Therefore, the operator, VM02, has progressed a site which achieves the required level of coverage whilst minimising the visual and environmental impact.

Prior to this application, the applicant undertook a pre application discussions with the Planning Department. Within the pre application feedback, the Senior planning officer, Nick Brookman,

"The proposed lattice tower would be substantially taller than the surrounding built environment but given it's proposed siting in the woodland identified above, it would not appear to be a visually dominant feature or one that would detrimentally impact on the area given the significant screening provided by the existing trees. The tower would not dominate the surrounding landscape in this location so long as the development retained existing trees.

*The structure has been designed to consolidate elements of site sharing into one location. The supporting letter states that this will inevitably require a larger headframe, however the benefit of this is that the structure can be shared, therefore reducing the need for additional installations throughout the area. **The location of the application site is ideal for such an addition given the level of natural screening afforded to such development.***

Therefore, in terms of siting and appearance, the Planning Department have accepted that the siting and appearance of the installation is appropriate for the area.

As established within section 5 of this report, the operator has reviewed numerous options to situate the development. These have however been discounted due to various reasons relating to visual impact, ICNIRP compliance, and buildability of the site.

The proposed development will not detrimentally harm the character or appearance for the area nor would it detrimentally impact on the visual amenity of the area, rather it would readily assimilate into it. For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development is considered to fully accord with the NPPF and Policy EC2 of the Core Strategy and JP-C2 of the PfE Joint Development Plan.

Contact Details

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Signed:	<u></u>	Date:	<u>5th June 2025</u>
Position:	<u>Director</u>	Company:	<u>Jet Network Solutions Ltd.</u>
		(on behalf of above operator)	
	<u></u>		<u></u>