

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
1. Site Details

Site Name:	Oxford Road SW	Site Address:	Land at Oxford Road Reading, Berkshire RG30 6YD
National Grid Reference:	E:329701 N:390159		
Site Ref Number:	Cornerstone 30452900	Site Type: ¹	Macro Streetworks

2. Pre Application Check List
Site Selection (for New Sites only)

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

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

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 letter setting out the specific requirement for an upgrade in this location, together with plans and other supporting information was issued to the Chief Planning Officer on 18-01-2021. No site-specific comments were received at the time of making the application	

Community Consultation

Rating of Site under Traffic Light Model:	Red	Amber	Green
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¹ Macro or Micro

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Registered Address:

Cornerstone Telecommunications, Infrastructure Limited,
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Outline of consultation carried out: Pre-application consultation was carried out with the local ward councillors for the Kentwood Ward. Pre-application consultation letters and drawings of the proposals were sent to these parties on 18.01.2021.
Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of relevant correspondence): No response to pre-application at the time of making the application.

School/College

Location of site in relation to school/college (include name of school/college): No educational facilities nearby in terms of the Code of Best Practice.
Outline of consultation carried out with school/college (include evidence of consultation): N/A
Summary of outcome/main issues raised (include copies of main correspondence): N/A

Civil Aviation Authority/Secretary of State for Defence/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 – No aerodrome within 3KM of site.		

Developer's Notice

Copy of Developer's Notice enclosed?	Yes	
Date served:	Developers Notice sent via Tracked Email on 28.05.2021 to Highways.	

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3. Proposed Development

The proposed site:

Background

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

The site is a replacement for Site No. VF 6735 Unit 127D, Stadium Way which must be removed from the network as part of the redevelopment of the area. As such, the operator needs to find a replacement site to ensure the latest technologies including future 5G can be provided in this area of Kentwood.



Image 1: The Existing Site

The operator is limited in siting options as there is a requirement to provide equivalent replacement coverage and capacity for this area of Kentwood. The replacement of an existing site means that the operator has to be located as close as possible to the existing installation in order to maintain the provision of equivalent coverage and capacity to the surrounding local area.

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The site is located to the rear of the footway of Oxford Road and Wigmore Lane. There are a number of linear structures within the streetscene including lighting columns, fencing, bollards and road signage which will help the equipment assimilate with its surroundings.

The site is not located within a Conservation Area and there are no listed buildings in the local area.



Image 2: The Application Site

As 5G is to deliver new technology, so too the infrastructure required is different than that necessary to provide the previous generations of connectivity. Wherever possible, existing installations will be utilised to accommodate the necessary infrastructure. In certain cases the upgrade of service will require a dual pole solution for sites which currently have a single pole design. Due to the beamforming technology required for 5G service, the antenna height in many cases must be greater than that for previous generation technology.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created unparalleled demand and pressure on the operator's network while people try to keep life and the economy moving through isolation and containment measures, with many people now working from home or remotely. This is a perfect example of why the operator must continue with its rollout as streamlined as is possible.

For the first time in history, all of the mobile networks sent out a government message to their customers with details of the new shutdown measures. The message from 24 March 2020 reads: 'GOV.UK CORONAVIRUS ALERT. New rules in force now: you must stay at home. More info and exemptions at gov.uk/coronavirus Stay at home. Protect the NHS. Save lives'. Even the World Health Organisation launched a WhatsApp chatbox allowing people to get instant information about the coronavirus through

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the smartphone messaging application. None of this would be possible without the physical infrastructure associated with mobile phone industry such as masts, antennas, microwave dishes and cabinets.

The importance of mobile connectivity during the pandemic was reinforced by DCMS in succinct advice to local authorities and operators published on 02/04/20: *'Government recognises the ongoing importance of the telecommunications industry at this critical time. Now, more than ever, the country is reliant on fixed line and mobile communications networks. Telecommunications has therefore been included as one of the critical sectors in new government regulations and legislation in response to dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak.'* The advice sets out (albeit in relation to emergency access provision) that *'Fully operational telecommunications infrastructure is needed to support mass homeworking and critical connectivity to emergency services and hospitals. Network operators must be able to rectify network outages promptly and to mitigate any effects of network degradation over the duration of this emergency period.'*

On 13/05/20, MHCLG advised that *'site visits and the use of digital technology and virtual meetings should become the norm in planning casework.'* (MHCLG coronavirus update 13/05/2020). Lord Greenhalgh clarified: *'Local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate drive the planning process forward and should ensure that it continues to operate effectively to support economic recovery. Moving to digital events and processes will be critical. This means adapting to working virtually, including virtual hearings and events (such as using video-conferencing and/or telephone) and making documents available for inspection online. The Government expects everyone involved in the planning process to engage proactively.'* (MHCLG Written Statement HLWS231, 13/05/20).

Given the increasing extent of mobile only online access in households across the UK, the importance of continued mobile connectivity is highlighted to enable public participation in planning committees and other online activities, for example.

In a statement issued 22/06/20, MHCLG confirmed measures to *"enable development which has already received the grant of planning permission or listed building consent and would lapse between 23 March and 31 December 2020 to be extended until 1 April 2021"*. Again, these are different circumstances, but it helps draw attention to government thinking in terms of the impact of COVID restrictions, even on sites which are not critical infrastructure, and the importance of kick starting the economy.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman in his Keynote Speech at 'Connected Britain 2020' provided the latest endorsement from Central Government on the importance connectivity. He stated:

"The theme this year is the future of UK connectivity. But before I talk about that, 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.

You have kept school children connected with their teachers, allowed isolated grandparents to speak to their grandchildren, and enabled great British businesses to power the economy through these difficult times. Without a good connection, I would not be able to join you all at Connected Britain. Thank you.

In my speech, I am going to touch upon the exciting work that the Government is doing on broadband and 5G, and also the efforts that we are taking to make these networks more secure for the long term.

But, first, I thought that I would reflect on the changed times that we are living in. 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

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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 in this sector have long 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”.

The Digital Infrastructure Minister stated that underpinning the Government's connectivity ambitions would be a Digital Strategy which will set out how the Government will drive growth in the tech sector and economy, and ensure we maximise the benefits of a tech-led economic recovery.

“And to bring us full circle, at the strategy's heart will be our vision for providing world-class digital infrastructure to all, in a way that is safe, secure and built for the future”.

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

The operator is seeking to replace an existing site (VF 6735) to enable enhanced 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity to the surrounding area services for Vodafone to ensure high quality customer experience is obtained as demands on the network increase and technologies change.

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

Type of Structure: Streetworks column – Apollo

Description:

The proposal relates to the installation of a 20m monopole supporting 6 no antenna, 2 no 300mm dish together with 3 no equipment cabinets and ancillary development thereto for Cornerstone and Vodafone.

Overall Height:	20m
Height of existing building (where applicable):	N/A
Equipment Housing: 1 no Lancaster cabinet	
Length:	1.898 Metres
Width:	0.798 Metres
Height:	1.648 Metres
Equipment Housing: 1 no Side Pod cabinet	
Length:	0.779 Metres
Width:	0.798 Metres
Height:	1.645 Metres

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<i>Materials (as applicable):</i>	
Tower/mast etc – type of material and external colour:	Column – Grey
Equipment housing – type of material and external colour:	Green RAL 6009

Reasons for choice of design and siting, making reference to pre-application responses: The operator has carefully considered the design of the proposed column. The operators are proposing the most sensitive design currently available to them which will provide the necessary coverage and capacity to the surrounding area. Due to all the technologies that will be available at this location, 2G, 3G, 4G and new 5G 3 antennas need to be installed at the top of the slim-line monopole. These antennas will be located at the top and are shrouded. These antennas will provide the latest 2G, 3G, 4G service as well as new 5G service provision to the Kentwood area. The proposed height at 20m is essential to provide equivalent replacement coverage to the target coverage area of Oxford Road given the top height of the existing installation at VF_6735. The antennas are proposed to be unshrouded. This therefore, does not restrict the efficiency of the antennas from providing maximum coverage to the surrounding area as shrouding the antennas would. The pronounced headframe at 580mm diameter is essential in order to fit all the operator's multi technology antennas within the same installation. This is the slimmest design possible which will enable all MORAN technologies to be supported from this site. If the column and shroud width were to be any slimmer then the technology would not fit in the one column and another radio base station would be required, which would lead to the proliferation of masts contrary to national Government guidance set out in the NPPF and The Code of Best Practice. Similarly, if the column were to be a uniform width throughout then the overall width would have to increase which would appear more visually prominent in the streetscene, than the proposed design. The proposed design is more visually sensitive and much easier to assimilate into a streetscene than lattice towers or unshrouded pole designs with bulky headframes. These non-stealth designs are preferred by operators as they are structurally capable of hosting more equipment and give greater scope for antenna orientation and are thus more efficient structures. However, such designs would appear alien in this location. Therefore, the operator has compromised on obtaining maximum coverage in order to better assimilate in to the streetscene. The design of the column resembles as closely as possible the other existing vertical structures within the immediate area including lighting columns and road signage. These vertical structures will help the proposed radio base station assimilate with the surrounding area. The site will also be near to a number of mature trees and bushes which will partially shield the column from the wider area. The design of the column is a simple, functional, vertical structure which will not appear incongruous within the streetscene. The column will be coloured grey to match the existing road signage and lighting columns and better assimilate with the sky. Although it can be coloured any other colour the LPA consider appropriate for example green. The cabinets are designed to appear like other statutory undertaker's equipment cabinets, including in the immediate streetscene. The proposed equipment cabinets are small for telecommunications apparatus and proposed to be coloured green like other commonly found equipment cabinets on the roadside. The equipment cabinets and meter cabinet can be installed under the operators permitted

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development rights, but have been included on the plans and in the description in order to remain fully transparent.

The transmission dish are required in order to provide a link in to the network. A clear line of sight is required in order for it to meet its design brief. As such, a centre line height of 14.30m is proposed.

The operator is proposing to install a structure which will be capable of delivering replacement high quality indoor 2G/3G/4G services as well as new 5G services provision to the surrounding area for Vodafone.

It is therefore considered that the proposal before you strike a good balance between environmental impact and operational considerations. The proposed height and design represents the best compromise between the visual impact of the proposal on the surrounding area and meeting the MORAN technical requirements for the site. Taking all matters into account it is considered that this proposal, to provide the latest 2G, 3G and 4G service provision, delivering the capability for a MORAN service from a single network installation, would not appear out of place within the streetscene.

Technical Information

International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Declaration attached (see below)	Yes	No
International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection public compliance is determined by mathematical calculation and implemented by careful location of antennas, access restrictions and/or barriers and signage as necessary. Members of the public cannot unknowingly enter areas close to the antennas where exposure may exceed the relevant guidelines.		
When determining compliance, the emissions from all mobile phone network operators on or near to the site are taken into account.		
In order to minimise interference within its own network and with other radio networks, Vodafone 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 Vodafone'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		

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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.		
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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

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

The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should not question the need for the telecommunications system, which the proposed development is to support. However, for the avoidance of doubt as set out below the proposed installation is needed for Vodafone, via Cornerstone to replace existing 3G/4G coverage and capacity whilst also providing new 5G services to Oxford Road.

The area within which an installation needs to be established in order to meet the coverage requirement is constrained by the location and extent of the coverage provided by existing installations in the surrounding area.

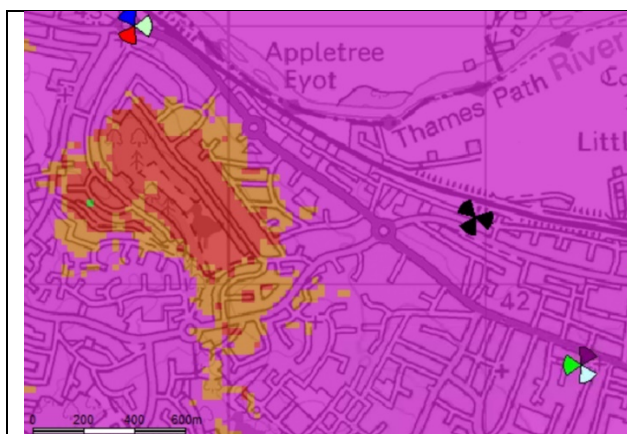


Image 3: Existing 4G coverage with existing site removed.

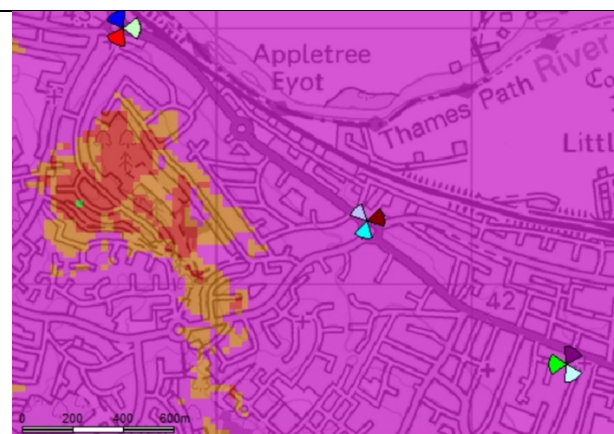


Image 4: Proposed 4G coverage with 30452900 integrated into the network

Indoor coverage provision is imperative across the UK, arguably more so within the major cities such as Manchester where connectivity plays a particularly vital role in commerce. During the COVID 19 pandemic many people are self-isolating or working from home or remotely and are reliant on indoor coverage provision, more so given the government measures² announced on 22/09/20 to work from home where possible, further setting the scene for how essential mobile connectivity continues to be. Without the installation subject to this appeal, the vital indoor levels, which allow customers to access services from within buildings, would simply not be achieved.

The tool demonstrates that the removal of VF_6735 will result in a substantial deficiency in good quality indoor coverage (see Image 3 above). Without a replacement the numerous businesses, visitors, residents whom rely on existing services will experience dropped calls and slow internet access will. This will obviously have ongoing detrimental social and economic impacts for the community and is contrary to the NPPF.

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54250696>

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Image 4 shows Vodafone coverage with the proposed site on Oxford Road built and integrated into the networks. The plot demonstrates that the application site will fill the gap in coverage with the required level of coverage 'Indoor Dense Urban' (pink) being achieved in much of the cell area including Oxford Road and the wider commercial and residential areas, as well as the local road network. 'Indoor Dense Urban' coverage means sufficient signal strength to provide adequate service for indoor use of a hand portable mobile in Dense urban/city areas. This is the required level of coverage in this area. In fact, it is the required level of service throughout the wider area for the networks to operate efficiently.

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

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

Capacity is the maximum data or calls that can be processed by a base station. An upgrade can be done in a number of ways, often by redeveloping the site to enable an increase in the number of technologies or increasing the number or height of the antennas.

Therefore, without this replacement installation, following the removal of VF_6735 the existing radio base stations in the area would continue to be detrimentally affected as they continue to try to serve a much larger demand. The result would be constant buffering and dropped calls to the surrounding area, to the detriment of locals, businesses, students and visitors to the area. Therefore, coverage is worse than the plots can predict.

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

There is a specific requirement for a replacement radio base station at this location following the planned removal of the existing site at VF_18257 to allow Vodafone to provide replacement mobile digital connectivity to Oxford Road whilst also providing new 5G services.

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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)

Site Name, Address, NGR, Site Type	Reason for not Choosing
VF – 6735 Adjacent to Unit 127D Stadium Way RG30 6BB NGR:468961/174258 (Greenfield)	This is the NTQ site and is no longer available to the operator.
Abakus Direct Unit 16 Stadium Way Reading RG30 6BX NGR:468755/174341 (Rooftop)	Due to the construction of the building there is no design available to support the operator's apparatus and provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area.
M-TEK Unit 18 Stadium Way Reading RG30 6BX NGR:468857/174296 (Rooftop)	Due to the construction of the building there is no design available to support the operator's apparatus and provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area.
TNT Gym 5a Bridgewater Close Reading RG30 1NS NGR:469120/174061 (Rooftop)	Due to the construction of the building there is no design available to support the operator's apparatus and provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area.
Junction of Loverock Road and Caxton Close Reading RG30 1BZ NGR: 469195/174221 (Greenfield)	The footway at this location is too narrow to accommodate the operator's equipment. As such, it would lead to highway safety issues. A site in this location has therefore been discounted for this reason.

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

N/A

Environmental Information (refer to Section 2 of Site Finder Report):

No specific environmental considerations identified to date.

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Land use planning designations (if Heritage Statement is required then include here or make reference to attached Heritage Statement):

No specific land designations.

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 (February 2019)

The governments National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 24 July 2018 and updates the 2012 version. In February 2019 the NPPF was revised again, with minor alterations to wording relating to housing supply and not any parts relating to telecommunications. The 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 112 states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. This wording echoes guidance set out in paragraph 42 of the 2012 version of NPPF. However, it also includes the importance of *reliable* communications infrastructure for both economic growth *and social well-being*.

The NPPF continues to support the expansion of electronic communications networks at paragraph 112. 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 113 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 116 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

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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'.

The NPPF builds on the aspiration to build a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 80 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 innovation⁴⁰...

Footnote 40 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 Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England (24 November 2016)

The Code of Best Practice has been fully revised in November 2016 and is now even more supportive of mobile network provision in line with Government aspirations that everyone should have access to the information super highway no matter where they are located whether that be in rural or urban areas. This Code provides guidance to mobile network operators, their agents and contractors and equally to all local planning authorities in England. It supersedes the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development (2013).

The principal aim of this Code is to ensure that the Government's objective of supporting high quality communications infrastructure, which is vital to continued economic prosperity and social inclusion for all, is met. The development of such infrastructure must be achieved in a timely and efficient manner, and in a way which balances connectivity imperatives and the economic, community and social

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benefits that this brings with the environmental considerations that can be associated with such development.

Section 2 of the Code highlights the Government's Communications Policy and Planning Policy. It acknowledges that the continued expansion and development of mobile networks is a key element of the National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016 – 2021. This recognises that digital communications are now a crucial component of everyday life, with improvements in connectivity being key to a vibrant economy (para 2.1).

Paragraph 2.2 goes on to state that consumers, businesses and public bodies increasingly rely on mobile communications and expect to receive a signal wherever they are. The Code indicates that recent changes in planning policy [and regulation] are intended to align with Government communications policy, where the ultimate goal is to achieve mobile coverage wherever it is needed. Section 2 of this Code also reiterates NPPF guidance in strongly supporting high quality communications infrastructure, which is seen as essential for sustainable economic growth.

Section 3 of this Code acknowledges that there are special operational and technical considerations associated with mobile network development, which have changed over time due to changes in technology and associated changes in demand. The Code acknowledges that there remains a reliance on radio masts to provide the main umbrella of coverage. Paragraph 3.1 explains that radio signals operate like light and must "see" over the target coverage area, they cannot be hidden and so there will always be a degree of visual impact.

Paragraph 3.2 clearly indicates that in assessing the visual impact, greater emphasis than previously should now be placed on the radio planning requirements to achieve mobile coverage (as shown in the recent changes to permitted development rights, at the end of November 2016, and the reduced test in the most recent NPPF).

Paragraph 3.3 goes on to highlight that the [operator systems tend to be demand-led or to fulfil coverage obligations. With the ever increasing demand for data hungry applications available to a range of connected devices, such as smart phones and tablets, the requirement to upgrade and improve networks through changes to existing sites and the development of new sites is constant. As most parts of the country move on to a superfast highway, so the need to bring coverage to 'not spots' and improve coverage in 'partial not spots' intensifies.

Paragraph 3.4 of The Code provides advice to local Planning authorities who are concerned about proposals, stating that they should not 'look for problems' but should work proactively with the Mobile Network Operators to find solutions, in line with paragraph 187 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 4.1 of the Code acknowledges that customer expectations have evolved with technology. The expectation is that they will always be connected and able to access services in exactly the same way as fixed broadband for personal, educational and business purposes.

Paragraph 4.2 acknowledges that data, i.e. using the internet, puts increased demand on capacity and therefore the need for additional base stations to keep abreast of customer demand. However, changes in working practices for the operators, in line with national guidance, streamlining networks, sharing base stations has reduced the overall amount of infrastructure required.

The Code goes on to acknowledge that operators maximise the use of their existing network infrastructure for the provision of 4G services and are similarly upgrading their 3G network infrastructure

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to improve capacity and coverage. However, the revised Code continues to advise that this does not mean that there will not be a need for any new base stations. Indeed, for example, more base stations will be needed in areas where there has previously been only limited or no coverage and where coverage and capacity needs to be enhanced in line with Government commitments and customer demand.

Similarly, some new sites will be required to replace existing sites that are lost, for example, through redevelopment of an existing building. Some masts may need to be redeveloped or replaced to enable an upgrade in services to take place.

Section 5 relates to mobile connectivity in the 21st Century, explaining that mobile phones and other devices are now everywhere. Mobile connectivity is not just making calls and texts but also mobile broadband. The majority of mobile phones in the UK are Internet-enabled smartphones and large numbers of people also now own tablet devices. People are increasingly choosing to access the internet using a mobile device even when they have fixed broadband connection available.

The Code acknowledges that by the second decade of the 21st Century, the greatest increase in traffic across mobile networks was in data i.e. internet use (para 5.3). Paragraph 5.4 states that in terms of the wider economic impact of mobile connectivity, research by Deloitte on the economic impact of mobile broadband across a range of countries, showed that a doubling of mobile data use leads to an increase of 0.5% in the Gross Domestic Product per capita, while another study put the benefit of 4G mobile broadband to the UK economy at £75 billion over a decade.

Section 5 of the Code goes on to highlight that connectivity promotes social inclusion. In recent years, more people rely on a mobile phone than they rely on a landline. Furthermore, people on lower incomes are even more likely to live in a mobile only household, or to access the Internet using a mobile connection (para 5.5).

The Code illustrates that mobile connectivity helps in the delivery of public services e.g. to access Central and Local Government via online services, acknowledging that lives are more likely to be saved when a 999 call is made from a mobile than from a landline, Telehealth is becoming increasingly important and text message reminders also improve compliance with medication and keeping NHS appointments.

Good mobile connectivity also promotes sustainability e.g. it reduces the need to travel and thus carbon emissions (para 5.7). The Code continues to support mobile telecommunications network as it is seen as a crucial piece of national infrastructure in economic, community and social terms (para 5.8).

Paragraph 5.9 states that there is a need to continually upgrade and improve mobile networks, which will not function without the necessary infrastructure on which they rely. This is driven by increasing consumer demand for data, improved connectivity and more capacity, together with Government aspirations for improving connectivity and coverage.

The Code provides guidance on siting and appearance principles at Appendix A. It sets out a number of design principles in respect of telecommunications development. However, the code acknowledges that the options for design used by an operator will be affected by site conditions including requirement to link the site to the network, landscape features and coverage and capacity requirements. The main options for the operator include:

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Mast and/or site sharing (including redevelopment of a site to enable upgrade or sharing with another operator);

- 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).

The Code in Appendix A acknowledges that it has been a long standing Government policy objective to support the sharing of masts and sites. Operators also aim to site share wherever viable.

Concerning the erection of new ground based masts; The Code at Appendix A page 27 provides examples of where the environmental and visual impact of the mast can be greatly reduced.

- Placing the mast near similar structures. For example, industrial and commercial premises, road signs and lamp posts;
- Placing a mast within or adjacent to an existing group of trees. This option is more successfully implemented in or near wooded areas. It should also be noted that the top of the mast placed in trees will need to be above the tree-line in order for the equipment to work for the allowance of future tree growth;
- Using simple and unfussy designs. Masts which have complex designs are more likely to dominate and be in discord with the landscape and have adverse visual impacts, and
- Appropriate colouring. Masts seen against the sky are best left in their galvanised state or painted pale grey. Against a wooded backdrop, a matt green or brown colour scheme would be more applicable.

The Code continues to support sympathetic design and camouflaging including concealing antennas in familiar features such as flagpoles, street lamp posts, telegraph pole style designs and signs.

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 Local Plan for the Reading area comprises the Reading Local Plan (Adopted 2019).

The Local Plan for Reading is the document that contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2036, which is the end date of the plan. It identifies the amount of development that will take place, the areas and sites where development is expected to be accommodated, and where it will be restricted, and sets out policies for how planning applications will be decided.

The vision is the starting point for the Local Plan, in that it sets out how we see Reading in 2036, at the end of the plan period. Reading UK, the economic development and marketing company for Reading, has launched a 2050 vision for the town as a smart and sustainable city by 2050.

Para. 2.1.4 states: By 2050 it envisages that Reading will be a smart and sustainable city that:

1. Shares success to support and enable thriving communities;
2. Delivers a real sense of place and identity;

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3. Thrives on cultural and cross-generational diversity;
4. Is recognised for its heritage and natural assets;
5. Embeds technology to deliver innovation and low carbon living for all; and
6. Welcomes ethical and sustainable businesses who support Reading.

The Vision states (inter-alia):

"Reading will be a dynamic, inclusive community of the 21st Century. It will be a clean, green, healthy, safe and desirable place in which to live, work, study and visit. Its economic strength will be harnessed to meet the needs of all in the community. Everyone will have the opportunity to benefit from all that Reading can offer. Everyone has a part to play in shaping its future.

Reading will continue to thrive as an internationally recognised economic centre, and the core of a wider, vibrant urban area and surrounding hinterland within other authorities, that makes a vital contribution to the UK economy. It will be an environment where new business can start up and flourish. It will continue to adapt to ensure its success continues with economic changes and new working practices. The right infrastructure to enable Reading to continue to fulfil this role will be in place, and people will be able to easily move around the town with a comprehensive network of public transport, walking and cycling. The centre will continue as a regionally important shopping and business location, but its role will be widened as a place for culture, leisure and entertainment, as well as a place to live".

Policy CC1 relates to 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development'. The policy notes that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain;
- Landscape;
- Density and mix;
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.

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Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.

OU3: TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

Proposals for telecommunications development will be permitted provided that:

- They do not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area or on the significance of a heritage asset;
- The apparatus will be sited and designed so as to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions such as lamp column 'swap-outs' or concealment/ camouflage options; and
- Alternative sites and site-sharing options have been fully investigated and it has been demonstrated that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive.

Planning Issues

The main issues arising from this prior approval notification are whether the proposed replacement mast and cabinets due to their scale and siting would be a visually obtrusive feature which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. 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 within NPPF, the local plan, its vision the relevant strategic objectives which support the provision of community infrastructure and promote the physical, economic and social regeneration of areas taking in to account the needs and aspirations of local communities.

The principle of development has been established by the Government when the new permitted development rights came in to force in November 2016, which enabled sites such as this one to be built under the operators permitted development rights, (as the column height does not exceed 25m), with prior approval for siting and appearance being the only matters that the local planning authority can take in to consideration.

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

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

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

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

Siting

The siting of the proposed radio base station has been carefully considered. To this end, the equipment has been located within the highway on Oxford Road. The proposed equipment will be viewed within the context of streetlighting columns, road signage and the industrial / commercial area to the rear. This is in line with CC7 and OU3 of the local plan.

There are a number of vertical structures within the immediate area, which will help the installation assimilate with its immediate environment including lighting columns and road signage. These vertical structures are similarly designed i.e. to be simple, functional vertical structures. These structures will help the column and associated cabinets from appearing prominent in the street scene. Consequently, the visual impact of the proposed radio base station will be minimised within the street scene. This is in full accordance with the aspirations of the extant policies of the local plan.

The proposed equipment cabinets and meter cabinet do not require planning permission, as they can be installed under the operators permitted development rights. In order to remain fully transparent, they have been included on the plans and in the description. The operator's equipment cabinets are similar to those of other statutory undertakers which are commonplace in urban areas including BT Openreach. Their limited height and scale will ensure that these cabinets will not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area and will be finished in a green colour.

In line with the requirements of NPPF, there are no existing telecommunications installations for the operator to share, that would provide the necessary coverage to the target coverage area. Similarly, there are no buildings which are suitable and available that the operator could utilise to operate their equipment. The discounted options are set out in Section 5 above and their reasons for being discounted are fully explained.

The transmission dish is essential to provide a link in to the operator's network. It requires a clear line of sight and therefore needs to have a centre line of height of 14.30m.

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Appearance

The design of the monopole has been carefully considered. To this end, it is a simple, functional slim-line monopole, with the main column being split in to two sections. The upper section is 356mm and the lower section is 456mm from ground level up to 6m above ground level. The unshrouded headframe is 580mm. This column width is essential in order to safely support the antennas at the top of the column. The column is proposed to be grey to blend in with the other vertical structures nearby and assimilate with an often-grey sky.

In order to reduce the visual impact on the surrounding area the antennas are proposed to be tight to the top of the column, rather than on an open head frame which would appear more prominent in the streetscene. Therefore, the operator has compromised on optimising the coverage in this area of Kentwood in order to minimise the environmental impact, by shielding the antennas. However, meaningful coverage will still be able to be provided to the target coverage area, hence the submission of this prior approval application in this location to maintain high quality indoor 2G, 3G and 4G service provision to be linked in to the operator's network configuration as well as providing new 5G services.

The presence of the linear structures including the road signage and lighting columns and the trees / bushes in the immediate area will ensure that the proposed column will not appear incongruous within the street scene. In addition to this, the site is located within the sphere of the adjacent industrial area, so there will be no detrimental loss of visual amenity to the area or environmental intrusion in line with Policy CC7 and OU3 of the local plan.

The telecommunications mast is proposed to be a slim-line simple, vertical, functional structure. The column is relatively slender and similar in design to the existing vertical structures in the immediate area along Oxford Road, albeit taller in height. As a result, this installation would not appear incongruous within the street scene in line with the requirements of Policy CC7 and OU3 of the local plan.

The installation of this 20m slim-line column designed to be as similar as possible to the other linear structures found in the immediate area will be no more at odds with the street scene and character of the area than the other vertical structures within the immediate locale.

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

Telecommunications apparatus by their very nature must be taller than surrounding built and natural form to ensure its efficient operation. The Code of Best Practice explains this requirement fully in paragraph 3.1, '*radio signals operate like light and must "see" over the target coverage area...*' To suggest that it is inappropriate development because it is taller than adjacent lighting columns or road signage is no more relevant than suggesting that street lighting columns are inappropriate because they are taller than road signage or traffic lights. They are all essential pieces of infrastructure within a streetscene that carry out differing functions and therefore cannot be considered on the same merits. Should a street lighting column be capable of the provision of high quality 2G/3G/4G/5G telecommunication services then this would be a reasonable consideration, but this is clearly not the case. As such, the proposal should not be considered negatively due to it being taller per se than other vertical structures. Reasonable consideration of the proposal in the context of nearby street furniture can only conclude that the presence of other vertical structures in the immediate area only

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seeks to provide a setting wherein a base station may appear more congruous from which to provide an important service to a wider area.

The proposed height at 20m is essential in order to clear the mature trees in the area and provide equivalent replacement coverage to the target coverage area of Oxford Road and wider area of Kentwood.

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

The equipment cabinets are designed to appear like other statutory undertakers equipment cabinets often found in urban areas. They are small for telecommunications equipment. The proposed equipment cabinets and meter cabinet are the least amount of cabinets that can be installed in this location and enable the radio base station to operate. If the number of cabinets were to be reduced, then there would not be sufficient room to house all the operators equipment. In any event, these cabinets are permitted development under the operators permitted development rights. They have only been included in the description and on the plans in order to remain fully transparent. In order to help blend in with their surroundings they are proposed to be coloured green, although they can be coloured any other colour that the council considers to be appropriate.

The design of the radio base station is one of the most sensitive designs available to the operators, designed to resemble typical existing urban linear street furniture, and that will allow two telecommunications operators to operate from a single site. 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 Best Practice as well as the aspirations of the local plan.

The proposed new site accords with NPPF because the equipment will resemble other linear structures within the area and will ensure high quality communications infrastructure is maintained in the area. Placing masts near similar structures such as telegraph poles, powerlines and road signage, utilising simple and unfussy designs is acknowledged in the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England to be less likely to dominate and be in discord with the streetscene and as a result less likely to have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

Lack of Coverage – Material Consideration

The proposed installation is significant to enable continuous coverage of the telecommunication network, ensuring that Oxford Road and wider area of Kentwood continues to get the mobile coverage it needs. 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.

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.

Without this replacement 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.

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The proposed replacement radio base station is in full conformity with the local plan. The proposals will ensure the retention and improvement of high-quality communications infrastructure for the community, investing in improved community facilities which meet essential everyday needs, as important as gas and electricity. Indeed, high quality telecommunications is often seen as the fourth utility service.

The proposed replacement installation will help improve the area's economic prosperity, strengthen the urban economy's by supporting local businesses to start, grow, adapt and diversify. It will support a better environment for today and tomorrow by reducing the need to travel and in turn minimise carbon emissions. 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.

Economic and Social Benefits

The NPPF strongly supports sustainable development, as does the authority's extant local plan. Mobile communication plays a significant role in sustainable development. Being able to access the internet via a mobile device allows people to access a wide range of central and local government services buy groceries, manage finances, apply for jobs/university, and carry out school projects, send emails, download applications, send and receive instant messages, participate in social media, streaming and downloading data to name just a few of the benefits of being able to use an internet enabled handheld device. It also allows people to work from home or on the move without needing to return to the office. Residents and businesses will enjoy better accessibility, assisting home-base working by improving the electronic means of communication and the roll-out of high-speed broadband helping to promote live-work development. This reduces travel time, carbon emissions and increases the speed in which information is processed/shared. The proposals therefore fully comply with NPPF and the Local Plan including its Vision, 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 supports development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Enhancing the 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity in this area and providing new 5G services will fully meet this national policy objective.

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.

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

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economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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on social and economic prosperity. This clearly highlights the importance of maintaining and enhancing high quality 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity in Kentwood 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 provide a replacement radio base station in Kentwood to provide 2G, 3G, 4G as well as future 5G is significant.

The proposed installation in this location will allow two operators to utilise the same installation and provide new and improved high quality 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity and future 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 and the local plan.

There have been numerous appeal decisions where the Inspector has attached significant weight to the benefits, alternative options, technical constraints and NPPF in a balancing exercise of all the valid material considerations, including visual impacts and the impact on residential amenity.

The issue of benefits and a planning balance was also considered in Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/W/18/3197522 Land at junction of Andover Road and Athelsan Road, Winchester. The proposal related to the installation of a 17.5m street works pole and associated equipment cabinet at land at the junction of Andover Road and Athelstan Road, Winchester.

The Inspector found at Paragraph 9 'The Government places a high priority on the provision of high-quality communications. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at Paragraph 112 states, "Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections". In this instance, the proposal is not so much seeking to provide significantly higher standards but to maintain recent local provision of 2G, 3G and 4G services as a result of a notice to quit from a nearby site that was providing these services. The Council has commented that service provision would be 'adequate' without the proposal, but the appellant has an obligation to provide not only appropriate coverage but also capacity for the network. I attach significant weight to the public benefit arising from the continuation of local service provision'.

In March 2020, the decision of Birmingham City Council to refuse planning permission for a proposed telecommunications upgrade was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate (APP/P4605/W/19/324191). Within the decision notice, the Inspector stated:

'In this case, the proposed development would result in harm to the visual amenity of the area, with particular regard to the proposal's scale and siting. As such, conflict would arise with Policy PG3 of the Birmingham Development Plan insofar as the development would not reinforce local distinctiveness with a design that responds to site's conditions and the context of the local area. However, I conclude that this harm would, on balance, be outweighed by the economic and social benefits that would stem from the proposed upgrade which would not be realised whilst reducing the height of the mast. Therefore, in the round, the proposal would accord with saved local plan Policies 8.55 and 8.55A-C, the SPD and Framework paragraphs

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112 and 113. Collectively, these seek to support the expansion of shared next generation mobile technology to create a modern, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure that is essential for economic growth and the life of the local community'.

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

Education:

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

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

Health:

Patients across the country are now becoming accustomed to relying on remote healthcare services such as NHS 111, virtual GP appointments, and ordering online deliveries of essential medical supplies. 5G will prove critical in providing the infrastructure required to deliver remote health services over the next decade. By design, 5G's ability to deliver real-time information (low latency), ultra-fast speeds (critical for high definition images and video), increased capacity and heightened security are going to be fundamental in scaling the patient benefits of remote healthcare and keeping medical records secure and private. For instance, trials have shown that connecting ambulance crews to expert resources using 5G allows paramedics to work with doctors and conduct specialist procedures in real time whilst on the road.

Summary

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

This follows an NTQ on the existing site (VF_6735) which means the existing site must be removed. As such, the operator needs to find a replacement site to ensure the latest technologies including future 5G can be provided in this area of Kentwood.

The proposed height Kentwood the wider surrounding area. This will fully meet the national Governments aim of 'ensuring that everyone is connected to the information superhighway' and the national policies set out in the NPPF. If the height of the column were to be reduced then the antennas would not be able to operate effectively, leading to a degraded service for the operator's customers especially for the higher frequency technologies including the latest 4G technology and new 5 service provision.

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

The social and economic benefits of providing reliable and high quality mobile broadband connections including 5G support growth in productivity, efficiency and labour force participation

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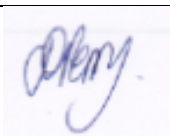


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across the whole economy. This is fully supported by the NPPF and the local plan. These benefits are strong material considerations which any perceived loss of visual amenity to the surrounding area.

Confirmation that submitted drawings have been checked for accuracy

Contact Details

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Signed:		Date:	03.06.2021
	Consultant Planner	Company:	Williams Acquisition Ltd
		(on behalf of Cornerstone and above operator)	

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