



Design, Access and Supporting Statement
in respect of
GPDO Application
On behalf of EE

At

**LAND NORTHEAST OF
COLD COATES FARM
COLLINS HILL LANE
CHIPPING
PRESTON**

PR3 2WQ (NGR E: 360574 N: 443015.



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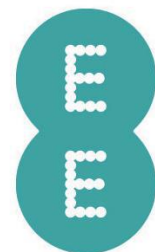


Table of Contents

1.0	Proposed Development	3
2.0	Planning Policy	10
3.0	Access	27
4.0	Regulatory Statement	28
5.0	Health and Safety	29
6.0	Conclusions	30

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Introduction

This Design, Access and Supporting Statement has been prepared by Telent Technology Services on behalf of EE Limited. The statement has been prepared in support of the application to install an EE 15m slimline telegraph pole and associated supporting apparatus on the Land Northeast Of Cold Coates Farm, Collins Hill Lane, Chipping, Preston, PR3 2WQ (NGR E: 360574 N: 443015).

In accordance with the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development and published Government guidance, this proposal was drawn up having regard to the need for good design. This statement sets out the most relevant considerations in respect of the proposed development. This provides context for the proposal, reasoning, technical justification and planning constraints, policy guidance and alternatives.

In particular:

- Considerations of design and layout are informed by the context, having regard not just to any immediate neighbouring buildings but the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. The local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions, materials and ecology all help to determine the character and identity of the development.
- The scale, massing and height of proposed development have been considered in relation to that of adjoining buildings; the topography, the general pattern of heights in the area; and views, vistas, and landmarks.

The following general design principles have been taken into account in respect of this proposed telecommunications development:

- A proper assessment of the character of the area concerned.
- That the design shows an appreciation of context;

1.0 Proposed Development

1.1 The Site

The proposed 15-metre telegraph pole and associated supporting apparatus will be located on the Land Northeast Of Cold Coates Farm, Collins Hill Lane, Chipping, Preston, PR3 2WQ (NGR E: 360574 N: 443015).

The application site lies on agricultural land to the northeast of Cold Coates Farm, accessed via Collins Hill Lane, within open countryside near the village of Chipping in Preston. The surrounding landscape is rural in character, comprising gently undulating pasture fields bounded by traditional hedgerows and drystone walls, interspersed with occasional farmsteads and isolated buildings. The site itself is not within a dense settlement but forms part of a wider network of farmland typical of this part of Lancashire, with long-distance views available across the surrounding countryside due to the relatively open nature of the landform.

The site is located within the Forest of Bowland AONB. In the local context around Chipping, the landscape reflects the transition between the more elevated Bowland Fells and the lower-lying farmland of the Ribble Valley. Fields are typically enclosed and well-managed, with pastoral farming (primarily livestock grazing) being the dominant land use. Scattered stone-built farmhouses and agricultural buildings contribute to a strong vernacular character, reinforcing the historic rural setting. The village of Chipping itself is a traditional settlement with heritage features and limited modern expansion, further contributing to the area's cohesive landscape character.

While the site falls within the AONB designation, it is important to note that this designation extends across the entirety of Chipping and its surrounding countryside. As such, the presence of the AONB is a defining characteristic of the wider landscape rather than a site-specific constraint. The area is not isolated in its designation but forms part of a continuous protected landscape, where small-scale agricultural development and infrastructure are typical features within the broader rural setting.

The proposed 15m slimline telegraph pole has been designed to sit comfortably within the existing rural landscape and reflects the form and appearance of vertical utility features already present in the countryside. While the immediate area is not characterised by urban streetscene elements such as street lighting columns, it does contain a range of agricultural and utility infrastructure, including telegraph poles, overhead lines, and occasional farm-related structures. These features introduce vertical, functional elements into the landscape, against which the proposed pole would be viewed. As such, the development would not appear as an isolated or alien feature, but rather as a continuation of established infrastructure typical of a working rural environment.

The wider landscape is defined by its agricultural use, and the presence of essential infrastructure is an accepted and necessary component in supporting rural communities and land management. The proposed structure would be seen in this context, where utilitarian features are dispersed across the landscape and generally assimilated into long-distance views. Its slimline design and limited footprint ensure that it would not interrupt key landscape

characteristics such as field patterns, boundary treatments, or the openness of the countryside.

This type of structure is commonly deployed in rural areas where a balance must be struck between maintaining landscape character and delivering modern telecommunications infrastructure. The height and design of the pole have been carefully minimised to reduce visual impact as far as practicable, while still ensuring operational efficiency and structural stability. The proposal would support enhanced mobile connectivity, including 3G and 4G services, which are increasingly essential in rural areas for both residents and businesses.

In addition, the installation forms part of a wider network upgrade associated with EE, who have been appointed to deliver communications infrastructure for the Emergency Services Network. As such, the site would play an important role in providing reliable coverage for emergency responders, including police, fire, and ambulance services, ensuring improved public safety and resilience across the rural area.

The existing site located which is 3rd party radio tower located at E: 360506 N: 442983 EE are located on cannot be upgraded due to technical reasons as such a replacement site is required as such providing enhanced coverage to the area by replacing old apparatus which cannot be upgraded including 5G coverage and capacity.

The site must be in the same geographical area to ensure that the network coverage is improved effectively. Therefore, the proposal to be assessed in this instance is for a 15m high telegraph pole and associated supporting apparatus is required.

1.2 Application History

As highlighted above, the requirement for a replacement mobile phone base station to provide coverage to Chipping as the existing site has already been decommissioned leaving a hole in coverage.

Therefore, a new location for a replacement installation in this area is required in order to maintain and improve coverage to the area.

The proposed new mast will not only service voice calls but will include provision for 3G/4G/5G data use which will be of great benefit to all users of the network. As you may be aware, EE have been awarded the contract to provide network services to the Emergency Services, which will operate over EE's 3G/4G and new 5G network and as such, this site will also provide coverage for all the blue light services in this area.

1.3 The Proposal

The proposed development consists of the installation of:

- 1 x 15m high Telegraph Pole
- 3 x antennas
- 2 x 0.3m transmission dishes fixed under the antenna
- 1 x Wiltshire Cabinet
- 1 x Weston Cabinet
- 1 x MK5B Link AC cabinet
- Proposed 1.2m fence with 3m double access gates
- Other ancillary equipment and underground cabling

The proposed structure is to be Olive Brown (RAL 8008). The ground-based equipment cabinets will be Fir Green RAL6009.

The principal components of the proposed development are outlined in the Site-Specific Supplementary Information, and the general layout illustrated on the submitted drawings as part of this application.

1.4 Alternative Site Assessment

The information below contains details of the alternative sites that were investigated when searching for a viable location. These locations were assessed to ascertain whether they would provide the technical and operational requirements necessary for the surrounding area. The search area is particularly restricted by geographical and distance factors, with close proximity to the target coverage area of major importance. As you can see from the map below, there are no existing masts/sites, buildings or structures within the search area suitable to progress.

1. Longridge Gold Club GF - Approx. NGR: 362459, 438965

The topography is too low at this proposed location to provide coverage to the target area as the hillside drops away rapidly to the south.

2. Forty Acre Lane GF - Approx. NGR: 362628, 439089

Wrong side of the ridge/fell to provide coverage to the target area Radio discount as the height required would be 30m plus which is not feasible.

3. Lancashire Way Path GF - Approx. NGR:363219, 439782

The site is too close to powerlines and very exposed from a planning perspective as it is close to a scenic trail footpath with little surrounding vegetation.

4. Jeffrey Hill GF - Approx. NGR: 363990, 440198

The topography is too low at this proposed location to provide coverage to the target area.

5. Leagram Farm GF - Approx. NGR: 362682, 444011

There is too much tree clutter between the proposed location and Chipping a very tall mast would be required 35m plus which would not achieve planning.

6. Stott and Sons Farm GF – Approx. NGR: 362851, 444498

The site is too exposed from a planning perspective and due to distance and clutter between here and the target settlement is not suitable for Radio either.

7. Twins Brook Road GF - Approx. NGR: 361366, 444511

The site is too exposed and directly in view of residential dwellings also not ideal for Radio due to clutter.

8. Collin's Hill Lane GF - Approx. NGR: 360211, 443320

The site is too exposed and directly in view of residential dwellings

9. Land North of Kirk Mill GF - Approx. NGR: 362035, 443652

The topography is very challenging for access and the site would tower over the conservation area and be highly visible.

10. Swinglehurst Lane - Approx. NGR: 362024, 443123

Well screened from most of the village but the impact on 6no. dwellings in the vicinity would make planning very challenging.

11. Leagram Hall VF SS – Approx. NGR: 362202, 444006

This site would be blocked by trees and would need a 35m + structure to cover the intended target area.

12. Land North of Garstang Road GF - Approx. NGR: 360579, 442910

The landowner is looking to develop the adjacent scrubland for residential development.

13. Land South of Burtholm Lane GF - Approx. NGR: 362697, 443796

This site would be blocked by trees and would need a 30m + structure to cover the intended target area.

14. Bowland Forest Gliding Club GF - Approx. NGR: 359451, 443578

This site is more open in nature than the proposed location and therefore, this was discounted.

15. Kirk Mills GF - Approx. NGR: 362031, 443556

This site would be blocked by trees and would need a very large structure to cover the intended target area.



The image above shows the discounted options.

In terms of how this information on alternative options should be assessed, the following paragraph from a recent appeal decision ⁸ should be the starting point:

I note the Council's reservations regarding the appellants' list of alternative sites, and to that extent I accept that the appeal site has not been shown conclusively to be the least environmentally damaging option possible. But the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not support that approach. Given that I have found no significant harm, it is unnecessary to consider other alternatives in any more detail. 5.10 This appeal decision confirms the approach in the NPPF which provides policy on this matter in three specific ways:

- *That LPAs should determine applications on planning grounds and should not seek to prevent competition between operators or question the need for the system (para 118)*

1.5 Local Engagement

Please refer to Site Specific Supplementary Information.

1.6 Additional Justification

Emergency Services Network Requirement (ESN):

In 2015, EE won the contract from UK Government to deliver a mobile network specifically for all blue-light emergency services across the country to provide a seamless 4G mobile service. The communications system will be critical in improving response times and improving communications between all of the blue-light services and providing critical infrastructure across the length and width of the United Kingdom. EE have committed to add over 500 new 4G sites to accommodate this commitment in that will eventually replace the existing Airwave TETRA radio system. This EE proposal will form part of the new 4G emergency services network and should be considered critical infrastructure within the UK to support the local community in perpetuity.

Shared Access – The Benefits of Mobile Technology

Mobile phones and other similar communication devices are ubiquitous both for business and personal use. Mobile connectivity is now about fast, secure access to the internet anywhere. People and businesses are increasingly choosing to access the internet using a mobile device, and the numbers doing so are growing, as ownership of internet-enabled devices rises.

Smartphones are integral to people's lives as mobile devices supporting a growing range of functions from communication to navigation, to use as principle sources of news media, cameras, diaries and numerous other functions.

⁸ APP/B5480/W/20/3251086 – London Borough of Havering (LPA Ref: M0008.19)

Overall, 94% of adults personally own/use a mobile phone with 52.4 million 4G mobile subscriptions. The proportion of adults in the UK with a smartphone has now reached 76% (as of 2017), with 18% of adults living in a mobile phone only home. Increasing coverage and take-up of higher speed 4G services is driving data use. The average volume of data consumed per subscriber per month is now 1.9GB.



Economic Benefits

Modern communications in all of their different and emerging forms, including mobile communications, help maintain and stable levels of economic growth and employment. Hence, the UK Government's continued commitment to the growth and development of modern electronic communications. These benefits include:

- Improve the ability of local businesses to operate and compete effectively through access to modern communications thereby helping to maintain and increase local employment opportunities.
- The contribution to the national economy is also significant where all businesses, from large to small, benefit from modern communications that helps them maintain and attract new business and service contracts in a responsive and competitive manner.
- Improve coverage over transport and infrastructure networks which improves the ability to work on the move and improve economic efficiency



Environmental Benefits

Modern communications, including mobile communications, provide effective protection of the environment by helping reduce the need to travel by enabling modern working practices such as greater home working. Such practices alleviate the pressure for new commercial development such as offices, through more efficient and flexible use of existing accommodation. For the same reasons, modern communications, including mobile communications, help ensure the prudent use of natural resources.



Social Benefits

Modern communications, including mobile communications, aid social progress, which recognises the needs of everyone. These improvements manifest themselves in a number of ways as illustrated by the following examples:

- People are now more likely to access the internet using a mobile connection than they are to have just a landline or to access the web through a fixed connection.
- Connecting to the Internet via a mobile device allows people to access a wide range of central and local government services; to do research for a school projects or apply to university; to manage their bank account and pay bills; to apply for a job; or to buy groceries.
- Most local authorities' services are now available online, and many councils have recognised the growth of smartphone use and introduced mobile phone applications to provide instant access to services, or to allow residents to report litter, dumped rubbish, pot holes and road repairs, or anti-social behaviour.
- Mobile devices enable flexible forms of working that provide opportunities to working parents or carers and help them achieve a better work life balance with both family and community benefits. By providing means of communication that improve convenience and enhance personal safety and security. This is especially important to vulnerable groups who may otherwise feel unable to participate in certain activities.

2.0 Planning Policy

2.1 National Planning Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024)

Planning policy is provided at the national level by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF is pro – development with a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ seen as a golden thread, running through both plan making and decision taking’. The thrust of this guidance is positive and a reminder to LPAs that we need to build the requisite infrastructure to enable economic growth. In this regard the Framework can be summarised as follows:

- Government policy is to support high quality communications infrastructure and systems, as essential for sustainable economic growth;
- Government policy is to keep the inevitable environmental impact associated with electronic communications development to the minimum;
- The keyway to minimise environmental impact is to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of new radio masts and sites;
- Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in certain specified designated landscapes, e.g., National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas, etc.;
- The emphasis on minimising environmental impact is greater per the sensitivity of the site. The emphasis on exploring and utilising site sharing opportunities is consequently higher in these circumstances;
- Best practice encourages a consultative approach and one that seeks to minimise potential visual impact and
- The starting point for planning new networks or the expansion of existing networks is, therefore, to use existing electronic communications sites owned by other operators or radio site management companies.

The NPPF as a whole is aimed at encouraging a more positive approach to town planning. While the NPPF builds environmental protection into the definition of sustainable development, there is also a very clear emphasis that local planning authorities should be looking for ways to help development come forward and not reject applications simply on environmental grounds. This is emphasised in paragraph 10 of the NPPF, which states that in order that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF recognises that this is especially relevant where a development might have other significantly important benefits such as being essential to meet, for example, sustainable economic growth or a national need which can include upgrading to or the provision of new infrastructure.

It is important to reflect on some key points within The Framework which are relevant to the very important development at this site and the general planning principles that should apply when determining the merits of the application:

- a. Paragraph 7 advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It then states that: “At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” [our emphasis];
- b. Paragraph 11 advises that authorities should:
 - “positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area” [as part of plan making];
 - meet objectively assessed needs unless the adverse effects would “significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits”;

As such, development proposals that accord with the provisions of the Development Plan should be approved without delay. In respect of this guidance, the following sections of this statement demonstrate that the proposed development accords fully with all relevant Development Plan and NPPF policies and, therefore, permission should be granted for the development.

The importance of the proposed development in providing the upgrading and expansion of the existing communications network is clearly an important material planning consideration as it directly supports sustainability and is also precisely the type of new digital infrastructure that the NPPF is seeking to support. The development proposed is comparatively small scale, and has been designed in a way that is predominately consistent with the existing infrastructure setup and so should be acceptable in every respect.

However, for completeness we still highlight some of the key points within the NPPF as they help demonstrate why the application should be permitted:

Paragraph 7 advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It then states that: “*At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*” [our emphasis];

Paragraph 20 advises that strategic policies should “*make sufficient provision for.....telecommunications*” and that it should “*be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances*”

Paragraph 39, on “decision-making” states that authorities should “*work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*”.

The NPPF builds on the aspiration to build a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 81 states: ‘Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking in to account both local business needs and wider

opportunities for development. The approach taken, should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation⁴⁰...

Footnote 42 of the NPPF states: 'The Government's Industrial Strategy, *HM Government (2017) Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future*', 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.

The NPPF (2024) directly addresses the need for enhanced wireless communication services, first mentioned in paragraph 20, which states that an LPA's strategic policies must make sufficient provision for:

"b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications (our emphasis), security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)"

Leading on from this, paragraph 119 states that *"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. 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....."*. This wording echoes guidance set out in previous versions of the NPPF. However, unlike the previous version it also includes the importance of reliable communications infrastructure for both economic growth and social well-being.

While supported, paragraph 120 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 123 retains the guidance set out in previous versions of the NPPF version and states that *"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"*.

187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

188. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁶⁵; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

189. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks ⁶⁵ Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. ⁵⁴ and the Broads⁶⁶. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

190. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁷ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

191. Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 189), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

As can be seen from the above, the NPPF clearly acknowledges the benefits of modern electronic communications and seeks to encourage such development as being essential due to their role in supporting a modern economy, contributing to sustainable objectives, and enhancing local community access to a range of goods and services. Local planning authorities are advised to respond positively to proposals for electronic communications development and this must include an understanding of the associated special problems and technical needs of developing and upgrading communications networks.

Public benefits are defined within the NPPF and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress. Benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England (March 2022)

The Code of Best Practice has been fully revised in March 2022 and is now even more supportive of mobile network provision in line with Government aspirations that everyone should have access to the information superhighway 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 (2016).

The principal aim of this Code is to support the government's objective of delivering high quality wireless infrastructure whilst balancing these needs with environmental considerations. It also has an important role in making sure that appropriate engagement takes place with local communities and other interested parties.

The 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 benefits that this brings with the environmental considerations that can be associated with such development. The Code also has an important role in making sure that appropriate engagement takes place with local communities and other interested parties. The Code also highlights that wireless technology continues to evolve rapidly, and mobile devices are now capable of much more. Second generation (2G) technology gave us voice calls and text messages, 3G led to the launch of smartphones, and 4G, which enabled faster browsing, allowed us to do things like watching videos on the move. 5G, the latest generation of wireless technology, is much faster than previous generations of wireless technology and can offer greater capacity and lower latency, allowing thousands of devices in a small area to be

connected at the same time. 5G networks, and future mobile generations, will be vital for a range of Internet of Things uses (IoT) and Smart City applications.

The Code highlights that local planning authorities should support the deployment of digital infrastructure by:

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

The Code highlights the Government's Communications Policy and Planning Policy. It acknowledges that digital connectivity is vital to enable people to stay connected and businesses to grow. Fast, reliable digital connectivity can deliver economic, social and well-being benefits for the whole of the UK. 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. Furthermore, 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.

The 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 all wireless network installations are principally guided by the technical need for the site and the technical constraints placed upon transmitting a signal. It then goes on to state that "the three primary technical and operational considerations for installation sites are: ensuring that wireless infrastructure provides an appropriate level of coverage over the intended geographical area; ensuring that sites have sufficient capacity to meet user demand; and, requiring a connection to the wider network 'backhaul'".

It then goes on to state that "With the introduction of 5G, more equipment will be required to provide coverage and capacity. 5G, as well as 4G, are data-driven technologies, and high volumes of data will be transmitted between base stations and wireless devices. 5G will require a denser network of base stations than previous generations, including more fixed line fibre optic cable for reliable and high capacity backhaul. The siting of 5G installations will be more constrained and guided by these special technical and operational considerations.

Due to the scale and technological constraints of 5G equipment, in some cases previous camouflage design solutions, such as tree mast designs and concealing antennas in flagpoles, may not be practicable or suitable. In these cases, simple designs with particular attention to colouration and finishes may help reduce visual impacts on a site-specific basis".

In acknowledging the considerations of new technology such as 5G, 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 need 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 highlights that planning authorities, and those who represent rural areas, should recognise the importance of access to reliable mobile broadband and services for those who live and work in rural communities, including coverage for the emergency services network. The benefits of high-quality wireless connectivity to the rural economy are far reaching - better wireless infrastructure will give rural communities greater choice and access to services, allow businesses to grow, and have positive impacts on healthcare, education, tourism, and remote working.

2.2 Local Planning Policies

The application in front of the Council is for prior approval. This is because the scale of the development proposed means that it benefits from permitted development rights set out in Part 16 of Schedule of the GPDO.

Described above, this is a light-touch process. The principle of development is established by the GPDO 2015 and the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A do not require regard to be had to the development plan. With regard to the policies of the local plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) regard should be had to these only.

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, requires planning applications and appeals to be determined having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations, and section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

The relevant planning policy framework taking into consideration is found principally within the following local plan and supplementary planning documents:

- The Development Plan, which in this instance comprises;
- Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adoption Version
- Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan (2019–2024)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024)
- The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England (2022)

Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adoption Version

The former local plan policy **ENV23 (Telecommunications)** is no longer part of the adopted development plan and has not been directly replaced by an equivalent standalone policy. As such, proposals for telecommunications development are now assessed against other relevant policies within the development plan and national planning policy, including those relating to design, visual amenity, and landscape character, as well as the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The following general policies apply:

KEY STATEMENT DS2: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

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

KEY STATEMENT EN2: LANDSCAPE

The landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The landscape and character of those areas that contribute to the setting and character of the Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and conserved and wherever possible enhanced. As a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.

POLICY DME2: LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE PROTECTION

10.13 Development proposals will be refused which significantly harm important landscape or landscape features including:

1. Traditional Stone Walls.
2. Ponds.
3. Characteristic Herb Rich Meadows And Pastures.
4. Woodlands.
5. Copses.
6. Hedgerows And Individual Trees (Other Than In Exceptional Circumstances Where Satisfactory Works Of Mitigation Or Enhancement Would Be Achieved, Including Rebuilding, Replanting And Landscape Management).
7. Townscape Elements Such As The Scale, Form, And Materials That Contribute To The Characteristic Townscapes Of The Area.
8. Upland Landscapes And Associated Habitats Such As Blanket Bog.
9. Botanically Rich Roadside Verges (That Are Worthy Of Protection).

Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan (2019–2024)

The Forest of Bowland Management Plan identifies the AONB as a nationally designated landscape where the primary purpose is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, landscape character, and tranquillity. The Plan recognises that the area is characterised by open rural landscapes, traditional field patterns, dispersed farmsteads, and a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, all of which are key attributes that must be protected from inappropriate development.

The Plan highlights that development pressure, including utilities infrastructure, can be visually intrusive in open and exposed rural landscapes, particularly where new vertical structures are introduced into otherwise simple skylines. It notes that even small-scale or cumulative development can erode the integrity and quality of the landscape if not carefully sited and designed. This is particularly relevant to telecommunications infrastructure such as poles, masts, and associated equipment, which introduce modern engineered forms into sensitive countryside settings.

A key concern identified in the Management Plan is the potential for development and infrastructure to affect the tranquillity of the National Landscape, including impacts from visual intrusion, lighting, and increasing human influence in otherwise quiet rural areas. This is directly relevant to telecommunications proposals, where tall vertical structures may be visible over long distances within open farmland and upland fringe landscapes.

The Plan also recognises that there is ongoing demand for improved digital connectivity in rural areas, but this must be balanced against the need to protect landscape character. It supports the principle that essential infrastructure may be acceptable where it is sensitively designed, appropriately located, and minimises harm to landscape character and visual amenity.

In this context, telecommunications infrastructure should be considered in relation to the existing rural character, including agricultural buildings, field patterns, and occasional utility infrastructure, and should avoid introducing prominent or discordant features within highly valued views or open landscapes.

2.3 Planning Assessment

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'.

As previously highlighted, Para. 39 of the NPPF requires that Local Authorities work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would assist in delivering the Government's Vision in respect of improved telecommunications infrastructure.

Central Government has expressed a support for new telecommunications installations and deployment of new technology. It is seen as essential for the country to develop and exploit the advantages of such new technology to the direct benefit of the public and the economy. It is seen that Local Government is key to the effective deployment of new technology as well as the upgrading of existing technology.

Support and understanding from Local Government is needed to process planning applications, to offer the use of publicly owned assets to locate new equipment and to liaise with mobile network operators in creating the infrastructure required.

The proposed base station, required to replace EE's equipment on an existing 3rd party tower which cannot be upgraded to 5G due to technical reasons as highlighted previously under Section 1 of this Statement, will enable the operators to maintain secure permanent 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G services to the surrounding area, thus improving the existing network of high technology. These services all allow home working and working on the move and subsequently reduce the need to travel, thus contributing to both Central and Local Governments sustainability agenda and also in line with the NPPF and Policies DN2, EN2 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Forest and Bowlands AONB Management Plan.

While it is considered that the proposal would be consistent with the aims of NPPF in respect of supporting high quality communications, it remains the case that any such proposal should be well located and ensure there is no significant visual impact that would outweigh the social and economic benefits of the proposal in line with the NPPF and Policies DN2, EN2 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Forest and Bowlands AONB Management Plan.

The area in question has been recognised as requiring a new telecommunications base station due to the need to remove the existing site which cannot perform to keep up with increased network demands, provide modern technologies and frequencies and allow for continued consistent coverage to be provided in the area by the operator(s).

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...*'

Additionally, paragraphs 3.2 – 3.3 of the Code of Best Practice explain that there is now far greater emphasis that visual impact should not override significant radio planning requirements to achieve mobile coverage to a particular area, particularly with the need to support the massively growing and intensifying demand for mobile communications across the UK. Indeed, in terms of looking to meet operational needs, the Code of Best Practice emphasises that the NPPF now applies a reduced policy test compared to previous guidance.

This helps clarify than an operator is only required to satisfy the normal test of acceptability having regard to all material planning circumstances, rather than looking for the '*optimum*' solution as required under the former PPG8.

The proposal would not give rise to any amenity issues given the distance from any residential properties. This is in line with the requirements of NPPF which supports equipment which is sympathetically designed and keeps the number of masts to a minimum [paragraph 120] and The Code of Best Practice.

Economic and Social Benefits

The NPPF strongly supports sustainable development as does Policies DS2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. Mobile communications play 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, 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 the need to return to the office. This reduces travel time, carbon emissions and increases the speed in which information is processed/shared. This fully complies with the aims of the NPPF and the Council's local plan to minimise the effects on climate change by reducing the need to travel and as a consequence the carbon footprint.

It is therefore clear that the Government places significant importance on reliable communications and as such the Planning Inspectorate gives significant weight to the public benefit arising from local service provision. The issue of benefits and planning balance is considered in Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/W/18/3197522 (Land at the junction of Andover Road and Athelsan Road, Winchester for the erection of a 17.5m street works pole).

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 addition to the above, this issue of public benefit and planning balance was also considered in Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/3162918 (55-59 Oxford Street). In this case, the Inspector found at Paragraph 20 '*Whilst I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area, the above factors lead me*

to conclude that there is less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the existing building and the SCA. Therefore, whilst there is some conflict with WCP and UDP policies, the less than substantial harm that I have identified is outweighed by the clear public benefits of the proposal in maintaining and improving vital communications infrastructure at an important location’.

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 also essential to fulfilling the potential of new technologies. Innovation such as artificial intelligence and connected cars will change how we work, spend our leisure time and run our public services.

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF (2024) 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 brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible’.

Providing high quality 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G coverage and capacity within the area fully meets this aim of the NPPF. The social and economic benefits are significant material considerations which should be weighed against any visual impact associated with any mast at this location, whether a new mast or the alteration/replacement of an existing mast. In addition to the above, HM Treasury outline such benefits in its report *‘Fixing the Foundations: Creating a more Prosperous Nation’* (July 2015). Paragraph 7.1 states 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 regulatory 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 in 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’. As such, there has been continuing and growing strong national support for a high-quality communications infrastructure that is fit for purpose and helps promote the UK as a world leader in this regard, particularly with the roll-out of 5G coverage. Further to Governments commitment to improve connectivity, on 24th November 2016 the new ‘permitted

development' rights for telecommunications operators came into force, designed to lift the restrictions on mobile operators such is the significance of the significant weight that Government places upon the benefits attached to modern connectivity.

In October 2016, there was also the BIG Infrastructure Group (as chaired by MP Grant Shapps) Report release calling on operators to improve their network. This is signed and has comments from numerous MPs nationally. A National Needs assessment – A Vision for UK Infrastructure was also published in October 2016. 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 sufficient digital connectivity has a detrimental effect on business operations, productivity and output and hence competitiveness in the global marketplace. 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'*. This Assessment goes on to further explain the consequences of a lack of coverage and the effects this has on social and economic prosperity. This clearly highlights the importance of maintaining high quality 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G coverage to this busy area a short distance to the east of the capital, where the social and economic benefits significantly outweigh the environmental considerations.

Ministers from the DCMS and MHCLG wrote to all CEOs of the Council's in England (March 2019) setting out the position in respect of supporting investment in high-quality, reliable digital connectivity. The Government acknowledges that such infrastructure is essential for communities to benefit from faster economic growth and greater social inclusion. Ministers state:

'it is essential to keep pace with growing demand for internet bandwidth and mobile data from local businesses, residents and those who visit our communities. As outlines in the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review, the Government would also like to see national full fibre coverage by 2033. We would also like the UK to be a work leader in 5G, with the majority of the population covered by a 5G signal by 2017. We are writing to ask for your help in supporting the investment necessary to achieve these objectives. Recent years have seen substantial investment in mobile and fixed digital infrastructure across the UK. While mobile coverage across the UK has been significantly improving, there are still too many areas where coverage is poor. The UK has now achieved 95% superfast broadband coverage but still only 6% full fibre coverage.

We need to create the market and policy conditions to support the large-scale commercial investment required to extend and future-proof digital connectivity. A key part of this is making it easier for operators to deploy infrastructure. To help to achieve this, the Government recently reformed the Electronic Communications Code – the statutory framework which underpins agreements between communications network providers and

those in both the private and public sectors who can provide sites for the installation of network equipment. The purpose of the reform was to make it easier and more cost effective for communications network providers to deploy and maintain digital infrastructure.

Local Authorities have an essential role to play as site providers. As Chief Executives, you can support investment in digital communications infrastructure by ensuring your organisations have policies and procedures in place that promote effective engagement with the digital communications industry and minimise barriers to deployment'

The replacement site will continue to provide high quality 2G, 3G and 4G coverage and capacity, supporting the Government's aim to 'focus on ensuring everyone is connected to the information highway'. This fully meets the aspirations of the NPPF and the Council's strategic strategy in respect of supporting sustainable development.

Assessment against Policy

In consideration of the NPPF and Policies DN2, EN2 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Forest and Bowlands AONB Management Plan. It is our belief that the development proposal meets the requirements of national and local policy whilst having regard to technical and operational factors and maintaining the necessary level of coverage to Maidstone. This supporting statement has justified the need for this proposal, and the installation of a replacement mobile phone base station for this new site is to address the inability of not being able to upgrade the 3rd party tower.

The proposed development comprises the installation of a 15-metre slimline telegraph pole and associated apparatus within an agricultural field located to the northeast of Cold Coates Farm, Collins Hill Lane, within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site lies in a rural landscape characterised by open pasture fields, dispersed farmsteads, and a generally low level of built development, where the appreciation of landscape character and long-distance views are key considerations.

The design of the proposed apparatus has been carefully selected to reflect a sensitive response to this nationally designated landscape. The reduction in scale and adoption of a telegraph pole form ensures that the structure reads as a utilitarian, rural infrastructure element rather than an engineered telecommunications mast. This approach significantly reduces visual massing and helps the development to assimilate more effectively within the wider agricultural landscape, where occasional vertical elements such as existing utility poles, farm buildings, and landscape features already form part of the visual context.

The proposal has been prepared with regard to Policies DN2, EN2 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. Policy DN2 supports the provision of essential infrastructure, including digital communications, provided that development is appropriately located and designed to minimise environmental impact. Policy EN2 seeks to protect and conserve the landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB, requiring development to be sympathetic to its setting and not adversely affect its special qualities. Policy DME2 requires high standards of

design, ensuring that new development is visually appropriate to its surroundings and does not result in unacceptable harm to visual amenity or landscape character.

The Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan similarly recognises the importance of maintaining tranquillity, landscape integrity, and the undeveloped character of the area, whilst acknowledging the need to support modern rural connectivity. In this context, telecommunications infrastructure may be acceptable where it is essential, sensitively sited, and designed to minimise harm to the special qualities of the landscape. The proposed 15m slimline structure responds directly to this guidance by adopting the least visually intrusive form necessary to deliver the required coverage.

Although the structure introduces a new vertical element into the landscape, it is not considered incongruous within this rural setting. The wider area is not devoid of vertical infrastructure, and the presence of existing agricultural buildings, boundary vegetation, and utility apparatus means that the landscape already accommodates a degree of functional human influence. The proposed pole would therefore be read in the context of this established rural infrastructure pattern rather than as an isolated or discordant feature.

The height of 15 metres is considered the minimum operational requirement to achieve the necessary coverage, and this is a key factor in the design of all telecommunications infrastructure. National planning policy and appeal decisions consistently recognise that such structures will, by necessity, exceed the height of surrounding features in order to function effectively. This does not in itself render them inappropriate, particularly where careful design and siting have been employed to minimise landscape impact.

The slimline telegraph pole design further assists in reducing visual prominence by avoiding the bulk and engineered appearance associated with traditional lattice masts or more substantial monopole structures. Its simple vertical form, muted finish, and limited footprint ensure that it does not dominate wider views across the landscape or materially affect the appreciation of key AONB characteristics such as openness, tranquillity, and rural simplicity. In technical terms, the site has been identified as necessary to address a defined coverage requirement, and alternative options for site sharing or use of existing structures have been considered and discounted as unsuitable for achieving the required level of service. The chosen location therefore represents the optimum balance between technical feasibility and minimisation of environmental and visual impact.

The photomontage report included within the application documents demonstrates that the proposed telecommunications pole is generally well assimilated into the surrounding rural landscape, primarily due to its limited and often partial visibility across the assessed viewpoints. From the majority of locations (VP1–VP5), the structure is only partially visible, indicating that existing topography, vegetation, and intervening features effectively break up and filter views of the pole. This suggests that the siting has taken advantage of natural screening elements, allowing the infrastructure to blend into the landscape rather than appearing as a dominant or intrusive feature.

A key positive is the distance between viewpoints and the site, which ranges from approximately 141m to over 600m. At these distances, the pole reads as a relatively minor vertical element within wider panoramic views. In rural contexts, where vertical features such

as trees, telegraph poles, and farm structures are already present, this type of development tends to integrate more comfortably. The wireframe views further reinforce that the pole occupies a small proportion of the overall field, reducing its visual prominence and helping maintain the character of the area.

Another important benefit is the limited visibility from certain viewpoints, most notably VP6, where the development is recorded as not visible. This indicates that in some directions the proposal is entirely screened, likely due to landform changes or dense vegetation. The presence of even partial or full screening in several directions significantly reduces the overall visual impact and demonstrates that the development does not result in widespread or continuous visibility across the landscape.

The report also shows that where the pole is visible, it is typically seen against complex backgrounds (such as vegetation or agricultural land), rather than stark skylines. This backdrop helps soften its appearance and reduces contrast, making the structure less conspicuous. The fact that visibility is described as “partially visible” across multiple viewpoints implies intermittent glimpses rather than sustained, clear views—another factor that supports good landscape integration.

The proposal benefits from sensitive siting, natural screening, and limited visual exposure, all of which contribute to successful assimilation into the area. The combination of distance, partial visibility, and background blending means the pole is unlikely to significantly detract from the rural character or visual amenity of the surrounding environment.

Overall, the proposal accords with national planning policy and the development plan by providing essential digital infrastructure in a manner that respects the sensitive landscape context of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The development delivers a proportionate and carefully designed solution that balances operational requirements with the need to conserve landscape character, thereby ensuring compliance with Policies DN2, EN2 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the objectives of the AONB Management Plan.

Any information required regarding location, height of antennas, frequency etc. can be found in the supporting documents, which are submitted as part of this prior approval application. As noted above, an ICNIRP certificate has also been enclosed. We are of the opinion that this proposal is compliant with all relevant planning policy, as noted above, and could therefore be supported by your department.

3.0 Access

Under section 42 of the 2004 Act, access requirements both to and around the site should be considered. It must be considered that this site is for telecommunications purposes only. In principle, no access to the cabinets or the mast is allowed and as such access requirements are not considered an issue.

3.1 Construction and Maintenance

Access to the site will be taken directly via private land. Maintenance visits are required approximately every 3-6 months by an operative with a light vehicle. Consequently, it is not envisaged that access to the site would cause traffic management or other issues. During the construction process all build, and maintenance regulations will be complied with. Proof of compliance can be confirmed closer to the time of construction if necessary.

It should be noted that the install of the equipment will be as per the latest NJUG guidelines which will of course consider the proximity of trees in the site area

3.2 Public Access

Radio base stations are not designed to be accessible by the public. The equipment cabinets would always be locked and only accessible by authorised persons. Therefore, no specific public access provisions are required to be incorporated into the design of the proposal.

4.0 Regulatory Statement

EE is authorised to operate a public electronic communications network and supply public electronic communications services under the provisions of the Telecommunications Act 1984, the Communications Act 2003 and the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003 and aims to meet all reasonable customer demand for that service.

OFCOM statistics show that in 2013 mobile phones are owned / used by 92% of UK adults. This demonstrates the vital role mobile communications play in the social and economic wealth of the country. Whilst most of the UK now benefits from mobile coverage there are still spots without coverage. EE under their communications code licence to run a public communications network are duty bound to provide equal coverage to all areas of the UK. Therefore, the need for communications systems should not be tested by Local Planning Authorities, as it is for the communications code operators to determine locations where coverage is required and demonstrate evidence.

The development proposed is to replace an existing EE installation which has been decommissioned and removed. Should this proposal **not** proceed, the area will be left with significantly reduced coverage or no coverage whatsoever in the future.

5.0 Health and Safety

Telecommunications planning guidance states that it is not for the local planning authority to seek to replicate through the planning system controls under the health and safety regime as it is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive. The Government guidelines state that provided a proposed base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure, then it should not be necessary for the local planning authority to consider the impacts of health concerns.

It is confirmed that the proposed equipment and installation complies with ICNIRP guidelines and a Declaration of Conformity has been submitted in support of the application.

6.0 Conclusions

As part of their UK upgrading programme, EE now propose to upgrade coverage in this area to include 4G and 5G services which will maintain and provide improved data services to customers in addition to the existing voice and text services they enjoy. In addition, EE provide the new UK wide Emergency Services Communications Network (ESN) and their 3G/4G/5G network will support this service. As such, the proposed replacement installation will form part of the ESN for all of the emergency services operating within this area.

The telecommunications installation proposed as set out in this application has been designed and sited having regard to technical, engineering and land use planning considerations in order to minimise its impact on the local environment. The mast height has been kept to the minimum required to ensure operational efficiency - a structure with an overall height of 15 meters is needed in this locality because of the surrounding clutter. Consideration has been given to the design of the mast and this is reflected in the telegraph pole design.

In relation to planning policy, in accordance with the guidance set out in the NPPF, a thorough search of the area has been undertaken and revealed that there are no existing masts or other structures suitable. Therefore, the development of a new mast site is justified, and it has been demonstrated that it has been sited and designed to minimise its visual impact and all other environmental impacts as far as practicable in accordance with Policies DN2, EN2 and DME2, and the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan.

The Council are therefore respectfully asked to approve its siting and appearance, in the event that they consider such prior approval is required.