

Town Planning Statement
5G Electronic Communications Base Station

At the Existing Cellnex Site

**Low Stowbank Farm
Kirkland Road
Ennerdale
Cleator
Cumbria
CA23 3AL**

Site Reference: 306221

CELLNEX AND MBNL

March 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of an application for planning permission for a 4G / 5G mobile base station for the mobile network operator Hutchison 3G UK Ltd, in conjunction with Mobile Broadband Network Limited (MBNL). The application site is owned / operated by Cellnex, a radio site infrastructure provider.
- 1.2 The application includes:
- A description of the site and surrounding area
 - A description of the proposal
 - A statement of community engagement
 - A review of planning policy considerations
 - A review of design and access considerations
- 1.3 A number of other accompanying documents have been submitted in support of the application and these are referred to and should be read in conjunction with this statement.

2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The existing and proposed telecommunications site (the proposed development) is situated within a collection of farm buildings to the east of Kirkland Road, approximately 0.6km to the north-east of Ennerdale Bridge and 1 kilometre south of Kirkland, Cumbria. Kirkland Road connects the hamlet of Ennerdale Bridge and the village of Kirkland.

The surrounding area is predominantly agricultural and includes open fields, trees and rolling hills. The Lake District National Park is situated approximately 0.6 kilometres to the south. No specific designations have been identified in relation to the site itself.

As detailed within the recent pre-application consultation, upgrading the installation will bring a reliable, high-speed communications network to the surrounding area which is largely rural.

- 2.2 The application site itself is situated within an array of agricultural farm buildings, including barns and cattle sheds. The proposed development is situated approximately 19 metres north of an existing installation which is to be replaced and shall be positioned directly adjacent to an existing cattle shed. There is existing access leading to the buildings and proposed site (application site). Furthermore, there are other services including power, which will be used to serve the site. Access and services are important factors to consider as they can be difficult to obtain, particularly in such rural locations.

Please note, the existing base station (to be replaced) is being utilised to provide services for smart metering. The new base station (which is the subject of this application), will comprise of a 20 metre high lattice tower supporting radio antennas, transmission dishes and ancillary equipment, along with a small number of ground-based cabinets. The entire development (tower and cabinets) will be enclosed by a timber stock-proof fence with access gate. The tower will support the mobile operator Hutchison 3G (UK) Limited, better known as 'Three' and while the structure will be significantly larger than the installation to be replaced, the tower shall have the ability to accommodate other mobile operators, which is encouraged under the Copeland Local Plan.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The development proposed is shown in detail within the drawings submitted and is for a new 4G and 5G electronic communications base station.
- 3.2 Unlike earlier generations of mobile connectivity, 5G has more significant technical and operational requirements and this has implications on the amount, height, position and design of the new base station. To help explain this important detail, we have set this out in the accompanying “**5G Technical Support**” document, which must be read in conjunction with this planning statement.
- 3.3 The principal elements of the proposed development at the application site reflect these various siting and design factors within the technical support document.
- Replacement of an existing 12 metre high ground-based monopole with a new 20 metre high shareable radio mast of lattice construction;
 - The installation of sector and dish antennas on the mast with ancillary antenna support apparatus;
 - The installation of ground-based radio equipment housing;
 - The installation of a timber fence with access gate which will enclose the tower and cabinets.
- 3.4 As necessary, any uncontaminated earth and materials excavated will be reused for fill and levelling.
- 3.5 The radio equipment housing will need to be mechanically ventilated to avoid overheating of equipment. The ventilation equipment is only likely to operate during the day and periods of hot weather. If it is considered specific noise attenuation measures to be necessary, we would be pleased to discuss practicable solutions.
- 3.6 Section 6 of the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England, published in November 2016, explains how mobile networks operate. In the annual network rollout information supplied, the operators will have explained their network requirements for 5G and the anticipated use of existing sites, including those owned by site infrastructure providers like Cellnex.

- 3.7 The application site has been selected by the operator as this will provide the required level of 4G and 5G network coverage while properly meeting national town planning policy objectives for the use of a shareable installation which in this case is owned / operated by Cellnex.

4. PRIOR ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 The recently revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England require a consultative approach to network development with the planning authority and local community, reflecting the particular sensitivities of any given site. The proposal received an amber rating when assessed against the traffic light rating model (see Appendix B of the Code of Best Practice).
- 4.2 Pre-application communication was sent to Copeland Borough Council on the 14th February 2022 with details of the proposed scheme, including a set of planning drawings and to seek feedback on the proposed development. The ward councillors for the area were also included in the communication. To the best of my knowledge, no response has been received in respect of the proposed scheme itself.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 The relevant planning policy and best practice framework is found principally within:

- National Policy, especially the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The local policy framework set out in the adopted Development Plan;
- The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England.

5.2 From these documents can be discerned the general policy background that exists for electronic communications development, site specific policies and the key considerations relevant to the siting and design of appropriate electronic communications development. As planning authority, you will be familiar with this framework and so in the interests of brevity, we do not rehearse it back to you in detail, but address instead the principal themes to demonstrate that the application accords with them.

National Support for Modern Communications

5.3 There is significant UK Government support for the delivery of 5G, particularly as this new connectivity will be a step change from earlier generations of mobile connectivity and will be critical to economic growth and sustainable communities. Our accompanying document of national policy '**National Policy - Delivering Ultra Fast Broadband Mobile Connectivity**' sets out how 5G mobile connectivity will underpin the UK Digital Economy and the significant social, economic and sustainability benefits of advanced modern connectivity. To deliver improvements to existing services and supporting future mobile technologies, it is essential that the planning system looks to support and facilitate new 5G base station installations such as that proposed to meet the Government's Digital Strategy. In addition, modern connectivity, such as 5G, will be essential to help the Government meet its wider sustainability and climate change targets and we explain this in more detail in our accompanying document '**5G – Helping tackle climate change**'.

Balancing operational and environmental considerations

- 5.4 The special operational and technical factors that require specific siting of a 5G base station should be balanced by the need to minimise environmental and visual impact.
- 5.5 However, 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 for 5G, the Code of Best Practice emphasises that the NPPF now applies a reduced policy test compared to previous guidance. This helps to clarify that 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.
- 5.6 In balancing these requirements, the starting point for the 5G networks or the expansion of existing networks is to use existing electronic communications sites owned by other operators or radio site management companies such as Cellnex. This policy objective is backed with the statutory obligation placed upon operators to share apparatus, where practicable under General Condition 3(4) of the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003, as amended.
- 5.7 Although a new mast is required in this instance, the infrastructure will be deployed adjacent to an existing site owned / managed by Cellnex (formerly Arqiva). The existing installation consists of a small monopole which is not capable of supporting further telecommunications apparatus or indeed the height required for the operational requirements of 4G and 5G. As a result, the installation must therefore be replaced. Within this context, it is considered the new mast will be seen as an acceptable and justified use, reflecting all of the considerations within paragraphs 112 - 116 of the NPPF and:
- The base station is required as part of a national mobile communications network, necessary to extend and improve mobile connectivity to the local area;
 - The target coverage area has been explained and consequently the special operational and technical requirements necessitate siting of a mast within it;

- All reasonable steps have been taken, through careful siting at an existing Cellnex communications site, to moderate the visual impact of the development, having regard to technical and operational factors. In this case, the replacement of an existing mast now an established and accepted feature within the landscape;
- The proposal to install a new shareable structure, looks to strike the optimum solution, particularly when compared with the alternative of erecting a new base station elsewhere in the local area and the development of an associated compound and with it, the associated additional resources in developing a new site.

5.8 The replacement installation requires planning permission, as the operational needs and associated design of the mast means that it falls outside the relevant width and height limitations of outright permitted development pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the 'GPDO'), as amended, most recently on the 24th November 2016. However, the relaxation of permitted development rights within the Amendment Order clearly reflects the Government's strong emphasis towards the reuse and redevelopment of existing electronic communications installations to minimise the need for further structures elsewhere and this proposal clearly follows the emphasis within that particular guidance. The availability of permitted development rights to replace the existing structure must be a material consideration in the determination of the application (and as a 'fall-back' consideration).

5.9 As a matter of principle, the development proposed is in accordance with the relevant policy framework and should therefore be acceptable. In the next section, the Design Considerations are reviewed to demonstrate that the detail of the development is also acceptable and that in accordance with the presumption in favour, planning permission.

Local Policy Considerations

5.10 At a local level, the proposal has been considered against the Copeland Local Plan 2013 – 2028 and in particular, [Policy T2 – Information and Communications Technology](#) and [Policy DM23 – Information and Communications Technology](#).

As outlined in Section 5.7 (above), Cellnex have an existing 12 metre high monopole which is being used to provide smart metering services. The monopole is incapable of supporting further apparatus or from being extensively redeveloped due to the layout and orientation of nearby buildings and access track.

H3G have a requirement to provide mobile coverage to the local area and in the absence of utilising the existing monopole, the proposed scheme involves erecting a brand new tower just under 20 metres to the north-east of the existing site. The new installation will comprise of a shareable 20 metre high lattice tower, supporting radio antennas, dishes and ancillary equipment, along with a small number of ground-based cabinets. The entire installation will be enclosed by a wooden fence and shall occupy a footprint of just over 40 square metres. As mentioned, the structure will accommodate the mobile operator H3G in the first instance, however shall have the capacity to accommodate addition equipment and mobile operators, depending on their specific operational requirements.

Notwithstanding the benefits of bringing a modern, high-speed communications network to this part of rural Cumbria, as per the existing site, the development will be set within an array of agricultural buildings and shall benefit from the presence of existing access and services, including power. Furthermore, due to the transparent nature of the tower design, it is considered the structure will blend into the existing buildings and wider area, which features trees and hills. Following investigations, the site is not subject to any specific designations such as a Green Belt or National Park.

As referenced within the 5G Technical Support Document, 5G installations will in many cases be larger than the latest generations, because of the greater amounts of apparatus required. Nevertheless, the height and scale of the tower along with the associated apparatus has been kept to an absolute minimum, balancing the operational requirements of H3G with any visual impact upon the immediate and wider area. The benefits of reliable and high-speed communications within such rural areas are outlined within the supporting document '**5G – Supporting Rural Communities**' and includes:

- **Improved social interaction and health benefits:**
Allowing family and friends to remain connected, particularly in isolated, rural locations.
- **Everyday tasks made easier with the potential to work from home:**
Examples include on-line shopping and banking.
- **Improvements to the Agricultural and Livestock Farming Industry:**
Potential to improve the efficiency of farming techniques by increasing profitability, output and making life easier for farmers such as the Agriculture Modelling Model.
- **Improvements to the Dairy Industry**
Includes the use of 5G collars and ear tags to remotely monitor the health of livestock, robotic milking sensors and hyperspectral imaging to assist with precision grazing techniques.
- **Helping to reduce the Agricultural sector's Environmental burden**
Includes the use of AI technology such as robots and drones to monitor and assist in the elimination of weeds in a more efficient manner.
- **Planning & Government Support**
The government recognises that rural connectivity is an important part of the UK infrastructure which can help improve lives, socially and economically. This has been shown by the significant funds allocated to rural 5G test-beds and the introduction of planning policies which encourage telecommunications development in previous contentious areas such as the countryside. In England, for example, the NPPF states that:

“Local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new electronic communications development in certain areas, impose blanket Article 4 directions over a wide area or a wide range of electronic communications development, or insist on minimum distances between new electronic communications development and existing development.”

The UK government has committed to delivering accessible broadband for all. Building Digital UK (BDUK) is a part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and has a range of programmes to deliver connectivity to all corners of the UK. One of which is the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme which was funded through to March 2021. This programme will help rural communities receive the digital infrastructure which has previously been lacking.

Former Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan, who left the post in February 2020, has emphasised the need for 5G technology in rural areas by pledging significant funding for innovative technology:

“The British countryside has always been a hotbed of pioneering industries and we’re making sure our rural communities aren’t left behind in the digital age. We’re investing millions so the whole country can grasp the opportunities and economic benefits of next generation 5G technology. In modern Britain, people expect to be connected wherever they are. And so we’re committed to securing widespread mobile coverage and must make sure we have the right planning laws to give the UK the best infrastructure to stay ahead.”

- 5.11 Notwithstanding the above, due to the presence of the existing telecommunications installation (to be replaced), the availability of access/power, the setting against a number of agricultural buildings, characteristics of the surrounding area and nature of the equipment proposed, the development is considered to strike the most appropriate balance between meeting the specific network requirements for the operator and minimising environmental impact.

6. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The development proposed is exempt from the requirement to provide a design and access statement under Article 9 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. However, to assist your consideration of the detail, this section provides a description of the process adopted in the design of the proposal and explains the access considerations. Due regard has been given to the factors listed in Appendix A of the Code of Best Practice.

Physical Context

- 6.2 The application site is situated a very short distance from the existing telecoms installation which is to be replaced, where there are existing access arrangements and services in situ. As this is a rural area, problems can often occur with regards to securing access and services, which are vital components for the operation of a telecommunications base station.

The location is also relatively discreet, being nestled within a cluster of farm buildings, while the surrounding features including trees and hills should further minimise any visual impact. The site will enhance communications within this rural part of Cumbria and depending on their specific requirements, the structure may be used to support other operators in addition to H3G, minimising the number of overall base stations within the surrounding area. We note that site sharing is encouraged by the Local Plan.

Amount, Design, Layout and Scale of the Development

- 6.3 The scale, layout and design of the development has been guided by the special technical and operational factors affecting the need to provide coverage to the local area, having regard to the need to minimise visual impact, already referred to above explained in detail in the '**5G Technical Support**' document. With regard to the main component elements of the development proposed:

Mast design/or mode of building install

- The design of the proposed mast is led by operational and technical factors of 4G/5G and the characteristics of the immediate and wider area. Whilst the lattice structure proposed will be evident from any near views, the latticework will help ameliorate presence over distance, especially from views where there is a background or foreground of vegetation. As mentioned above, the site is positioned within an array of buildings, while there are trees and hills in the surrounding area. That said, the local topography will limit such views from public vantage points and any sensitive visual receptors.
- The mast required cannot be hidden, but any impacts on the landscape and visual amenity will be limited and moderated by confining height to what is required for operational reasons. Compared to other forms of vertical infrastructure also found in the landscape, the mast proposed is a benign structure: it is much lower than the television broadcast masts owned and operated by Arqiva; it is lower and does not form a string of structures that march across the countryside like pylons; and it does not move like wind turbines, which are typically higher and are usually developed in clusters.
- Alternative designs like shareable tree masts have been considered, however they cannot accommodate the amount of apparatus necessary to support the required equipment. Even if a tree mast could be designed to support such apparatus, it would still amount to an engineering solution unlikely to replicate the natural features and characteristics of a tree, appearing as a prominent and incongruous feature in the wider landscape.

Antenna Array

- The number of antennas, dishes and their size, has been kept to the minimum necessary to provide coverage and to link this site back into the operator's network. The design of these features is very much driven by operational and technical factors.

Equipment Cabinets

- The number of radio equipment cabinets and their size has been limited to what is required to meet the operator's current and foreseeable network requirements. The location and design of the equipment cabinets, and the electronic communications equipment housed within them, reflects their functionality and the technical and operational requirement to be in reasonable proximity to the antenna systems and dishes that they support. This avoids exceptionally large runs of feeder cables and associated supporting trays, and the subsequent loss of signals.

Access Considerations

- 6.4 Access to the site will be provided from an established entrance that leads to and from Kirkland Road.
- 6.5 Once constructed, the development will be unmanned requiring only periodic visits, typically once every two to three months for routine maintenance and servicing.
- 6.6 In accordance with all relevant health and safety legislation and guidelines, access to the site will be restricted to authorised personnel and the routine maintenance and servicing of the apparatus will only be carried out by properly trained and qualified staff. Electronic communications base stations are specifically designed to prevent unauthorised access by members of the public and, therefore, there is no requirement to incorporate inclusive access arrangements into the proposed layout and design of the development.

Landscaping

- 6.7 The proposed siting of the development has been very carefully chosen to minimise environmental impact. Any potential impact of the development is principally associated with the radio mast, which is the most visible component of the base station, and which cannot be fully screened for operational reasons. The height of the mast means that any attempt to screen it in its entirety would be unrealistic in any event.
- 6.8 At a lower level, the mast will benefit from screening afforded by the neighbouring agricultural buildings, while higher up, the site will be set against the surrounding landscape which includes trees and hills.

The use of a lattice tower, which is a relatively open and permeable structure, will give the impression of allowing views through the structure to the backdrop of trees, terrain and sky, thereby minimising its visual impact.

For the reasons above, additional landscaping is not considered appropriate and has not been included within the scheme. Please note, due to the orientation of adjacent buildings and space in general, there is little scope to incorporate further screening.

Appearance

- 6.9 The sensitive approach to siting and design should minimise the appearance of the development proposed. In addition, as indicated above the local topography and natural features should help minimise views. Insofar as the mast and compound may be visible they should look straight forward in appearance and reflect their function. Notwithstanding the established monopole and compound which is to be replaced, the development should in time become accepted features of the local environment as with other forms of communications networks and essentially public utility infrastructure, such as roads and railways.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 7.1 In support of the application, we include a separate document called '**5G Health and Safety**' which sets out in more detail the associated health and safety considerations. Every installation on a site owned or managed by Cellnex will be compliant with international standards adopted by the UK Government. A certificate confirming compliance with the relevant ICNIRP guidelines on public exposure has been supplied with this application.
- 7.2 The ICNIRP guidelines seek to protect against the well-known thermal effects of radio emissions and include a significant precautionary factor. These guidelines apply to all forms of electronic communications and mobile technology is one of the lowest powered of these.
- 7.3 National planning policy remains clear, provided an application is certified as ICNIRP compliant, local planning authorities should not seek to effectively set different guidelines through the refusal of planning permission.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. In summary, the application is in respect of an electronic communications base station necessary to improve a vital network that provides public services.
- 8.2. The service provided by the operator is in the public interest and is in very high demand with 5G being the next and highly significant advancement in mobile connectivity. In the UK there are now more than 92.5 million subscriptions to mobile networks and mobile services now exceed fixed landlines in terms of customer numbers and usage.
- 8.3. The public interest of the system is clear from the considerable benefits that will flow and it makes a significant and major contribution towards sustainable objectives.
- 8.4. The operator's requirement is in the context of network needs associated with a 4G and 5G cellular system. These impose particular locational and siting requirements which are even greater with 5G. The technical justification clearly demonstrates the need for this apparatus proposed within the context of the operator's surrounding network.
- 8.5. The operator has followed national and local planning policy and best practice guidance in the siting and design of its apparatus in recognition of the need to minimise visual impact. This has included:
- Network planning based upon existing sites, including those controlled by Radio Site Management companies like Cellnex.
 - Siting at an existing electronic communications site to minimise new sites and help avoid the unnecessary proliferation of new radio masts and sites for them.
 - Engagement in accordance with the Code of Best Practice procedures.
 - An examination of design options to try and minimise potential visual impact.
 - The replacement of an existing radio mast, compared with the alternative of erecting a new mast and associated compound within the wider area and with it, the associated additional resources in developing a new site.

- 8.6. The proposed antennas will comply with all relevant health and safety requirements and will be compliant with the ICNIRP guidelines. There are no exceptional circumstances in this case and therefore no need to consider health effects and related concerns such as the perception of risk further.
- 8.7. This statement and the other accompanying material has demonstrated that the proposal is in accordance with local Development Plan policy and national policy set out in particular within the NPPF. In particular, it is a form of development that is specifically encouraged as a matter of principle and in its detail complies with the policy objective of minimising potential environmental impact.
- 8.8. In conclusion, the application is for sustainable development, acceptable as a matter of principle and appropriate in its detail and so one which the presumption in favour of granting approval applies.