Richard Morrison, Agent 2020/1781/P – additional statement from applicant 12/10/2020.

Hello Matthew,

Further to our email exchange on this site, my client has asked that I reiterate the public benefits of the scheme prior to the Council progressing with a decision on the site. There are a number of recent government announcements that I’d also like to draw your attention to.

The applicant would again stress that there are significant and extensive public benefits associated with the proposed development which need to be balanced against any perceived less than substantial harm. These are as follows:

* Provide new 5G coverage;
* Improve the ability of local businesses and industry to operate and compete effectively through access to modern communications thereby helping to maintain and increase local employment opportunities;
* Enhance digital connectivity across a busy junction in the local road network;
* The proposal would contribute towards the Government’s long-standing and well documented commitment to maintaining and improving communications networks across all of Britain. The sustainable objectives that facilitate public benefits will be supported in the following ways:

1. **An economic role** – modern communications in all of their different and emerging forms, including mobile communications, help maintain high and stable levels of economic growth and employment. Hence, the UK Government’s continued commitment to the growth and development of modern electronic communications.
2. **A Social role** – modern communications, including mobile communications, aid social progress, which recognises the needs of everyone.
3. **An environmental role** – 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.

Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of public benefits associated with telecommunications development have become more pronounced as the public reliance on effective communication networks increased. Online Nation 2020 produced by Ofcom to look at what people in the UK are doing online and industry trends amongst other things, found in relation to the increasing importance of mobile connectivity:

* 71% of all measured time spent online was on smartphones.
* 35% of internet users only accessed the internet on mobile devices (smartphone or tablet).
* In 2020, a fifth (22%) of UK adults have a smart speaker in the home and 11% of all UK households own some kind of ‘smart home’ technology (including devices such as smart home security, smart lighting and smart heating).

**Other recent material considerations**

As recently as 23.9.20, the Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman MP spoke about the ongoing work by the Government and telecoms industry to boost the UK’s world class digital connectivity in his keynote speech at Connected Britain 2020 ([https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/matt-warmans-keynote-speech-at-connected-britain-2020?utm\_source=01ad07cc-6884-4d9b-a0ca-8c212f0a4289&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\_content=immediate](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/TwTXC5QZNUR3y69czrxUM?domain=gov.uk)):

…*’I’d like to take this opportunity  to thank everyone in the industry for their tireless efforts at keeping us all connected through an unprecedented period of disruption.*

*…COVID has altered the way we live, work and most importantly, stay connected with our family and friends.  The digital infrastructure that keeps us all connected was essential to our daily way of life under lockdown – and is now more important than ever as we head into recovery.  Many of these changes – such as increased working from home – will stay with us for the foreseeable future*.

*People have referred to the internet as “the fourth utility” – and its true.  For countless people across the country, having fast and reliable broadband and a good mobile connection is as essential and vital to our daily lives as gas, water and electricity.*

*That’s why I’m committed to working with you to ensure the entire nation has access to world-class, next generation gigabit connectivity that is secure and resilient enough to deal with all sorts of future challenges.*

*This Government is ambitious for the UK’s digital infrastructure*.

*And because we know that more citizens are increasingly living their lives online, we will be one of the earliest adopters of 5G coverage, with the majority of the population able to access 5G by 2027*.

...*We know how important local authorities are to the delivery of digital infrastructure, which is why I have written to them, together with the Local Government Minister, to outline how they can work more effectively with the industry*…

….Turning to 5G, while the commercial rollout of 5G continues at pace, we’re pushing ahead with plans to make sure all sorts of industries benefit from this game-changing technology.

….since the start of the 5G Testbeds and trials programme, we’ve now funded 24 5G testbeds across the UK.  Between them, those testbeds have trialled almost 70 different 5G technologies, produces and applications.  And more importantly than ever, we are investing in a range of sectors to foster, build and grow 5G cross wider industry...

…The world is in the middle of a digital revolution.  COVID has accelerated this process, digitising almost every part of our everyday lives and making the infrastructure that connects us more important than ever.  That’s why it is at the top of the government’s agenda…

This Keynote Speech by Mat Warman MP highlights the importance that Government places on 5G and advanced, reliable, high quality 5G technology.  To prevent this technology from being able to be provided in this key 5G test bed area would be a significant retrograde step and one that the Government does not support.

On the 1 October 2020, as part of the Speed up Britain Campaign, The Centre of Policy Studies Report published ‘*Upwardly Mobile: How the UK can gain the full benefits of the 5G revolution*’.  The report identifies what the 5G opportunities are and what the Government needs to do so we can all benefit from this vital new technology.  It states that delays to the rollout of 5G could cost the country tens of billions of pounds in lost economic output.  The former Government advisers Alex Jackman and Nick King argue that Government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda and the UK’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is at risk without a faster 5G rollout – to the tune of £41 billion.  Therefore providing new digital infrastructure which enables 5G to be provided in this area is essential to the economy and a significant benefit which much be balanced against the perceived harm to the surrounding area.

The report highlights that if delays continue at their current rate, by 2027, over 11 million households and businesses could be missing out on vital digital connectivity.  Improving digital infrastructure supports the Government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda, by helping local areas to retain and attract businesses and talent as well as by reducing regional inequalities.

The report states that the UK must have a functioning network to now support the recovery from the pandemic, empowering businesses and communities with wider coverage, and preparing the ground for the services that 5G can provide.

Using analysis by the independent consultancy Policy Points, the report estimates that if 5G coverage reaches a quarter more of the population than the Government’s current target of 51%, it will produce GDP gains of £41.7 billion by 2027.  It highlights that the difference between the UK being a leader and a laggard in 5G adoption could be as much as £173 billion in incremental GDP over the coming decade, as estimated by the Future Communications Challenge Group.

The manufacturing, construction and agricultural sectors have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, and these would benefit significantly from improved connectivity.  However, onerous planning rules and loopholes in existing legislation are slowing down the infrastructure upgrades needed to make the most of this mobile revolution in these much-needed industries.

Digital networks and services have underpinned our resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic and they will drive our recovery.  By expanding them, we deliver not only immediate benefits but also the essential foundation stone for future prosperity.

The report highlights that while 5G promises to create economic benefits through increased capacity, reliability and speed – vastly improving business productivity and removing barriers imposed by poor digital connectivity – the system is plagued by red tape.

The report acknowledges that the gains are not just at national level.  A more extensive digital infrastructure helps local areas to attract and retain businesses and talent, thereby playing a vital role in reducing regional inequalities.  Providing a supportive environment for digital infrastructure is one of the few things the Government can do that costs little, boosts growth and helps level up the UK….the key is speed.  The faster a network is built, the bigger the regional gains.  The telecommunications industry faces challenges on this front.  The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand on networks but delayed the availability of new spectrum to provide additional capacity.

The report notes that the reliability and reach of 4G is more important than ever.  It is needed both to quench immediate demand, and also to facilitate future 5G rollout, as the underlying passive infrastructure will initially support both technologies.   Every failure to provide better coverage not only presents an immediate opportunity loss for local business and consumers but also has a bigger downstream economic impact.  It acknowledges that productivity gains to business, equality gains for regions and economic gains for the country are only as achievable as the networks they can access.

The report recommended that the Government should reform the strategic planning framework to compel local authorities to ensure that the needs of future mobile connectivity are adequately addressed in Local Plans and that new developments are assessed on how they might impact, or could support, local connectivity.

The above therefore clearly demonstrates the significant benefits for the users of the operator’s network in this area of Camden and should the application to provide 5G in this area be refused, the knock-on effects to the surrounding area through lost economic output, the COVID recovery plan and the social impact would be massive.  Such is the Government’s commitment to 5G it is looking to amend further the Electronic Communications Code and the operators permitted development rights to speed up the delivery of communications technology and in particular 5G roll out.

I would be grateful if you could take the above into consideration in the Council’s decision-making process and would be happy to respond to any specific queries that may arise.

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