

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT
OF
APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION/PRIOR APPROVAL
INCORPORATING THE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

12th March 2020

Arqiva

**The Ponderosa
Scotland Lane
Horsforth
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS18 5SF**

Ref: NE324

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Proposed Development

This application is for the installation of electronic communications apparatus required for the Government's project to develop new Smart Metering network.

Arqiva, an Electronic Communications Code Network Operator, has been appointed by the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) as its implementation partner to develop the Smart Meter infrastructure network in the north of England and Scotland.

The Benefits of the Smart Metering Network

The Government is implementing a programme to roll out, between 2014 and 2020, smart electricity and gas meters to homes and small businesses across Great Britain. Smart Meters are the next generation of gas and electricity meters and this part of the programme is being implemented by the gas and electricity customer suppliers. The Smart Meters will offer a range of intelligent functions and provide consumers with more accurate information, bringing an end to estimated billing. Consumers will have near-real time information on their energy consumption to help them control and manage their energy use, save money and reduce emissions.

A key feature of Smart Meters is that they are continuously connected to data centres to provide and manage the constant flow of data and functionality. Smart Meters must therefore be linked to an electronic communications network and as indicated above, Arqiva has been instructed by Government to provide a dedicated Smart Metering Network (SMN) for this purpose.

The smart meter initiative is a key part of the Government's programme to cut greenhouse gas emissions, decarbonise the economy and support the creation of new green jobs and technologies. Indeed, the smart metering programme is one of the top priorities identified in the National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016 - 2021.

In providing these benefits the SMN of which this development will form part is one of the Governments key initiatives to help achieve the difficult goals of sustainable

development. This places the development squarely in accordance with the statutory duty placed upon local planning authorities and accentuated by the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Technical and Operational Constraints

The SMN, like all electronic communications networks, is to be supported by an infrastructure of operational sites with the required antennas and other apparatus needed to provide radio coverage to the local area. In that sense, they have similarities with cellular networks, with the Smart Meters, being the devices that must connect and communicate with the network antennas, rather than mobile devices.

The SMN sites must therefore be located in proximity to the premises that will be served and must be able to communicate with meters that are often located within the heart of a property, for example, in an under stairs cupboard.

Consistent with planning policy, the main sites that form the SMN have been largely planned around sharing or using existing communication sites, buildings and structures and where this has not been possible, new ground-based masts. These main installations provide the main umbrella of coverage to larger geographical areas and premises within those areas.

However, there are still smaller settlements, peripheral areas and more remote locations that cannot be covered by these sites due to coverage constraints, often related to distance, topography or other environmental related factors. Hence, in order to provide more localised coverage to these areas, a secondary layer of smaller sites, known as *micro sites*, are required and these are generally physically smaller. The application is in relation to a site required for this secondary layer as explained in more detail below.

Site Selection

The micro and repeater sites are required to provide localised coverage over very specific areas and so the siting parameters for coverage reasons are narrow.

The sites must also satisfy a range of operational criteria, such as good fibre connectivity, an existing power supply suitably high and resilient for an electronic communications network, a reasonable level of security and with reasonable vehicular access for ongoing maintenance. In addition, the site must be capable of being constructed without undue constraints and avoiding undue environmental disturbance, that for example, might be associated with creating new access tracks and supplying new power runs above or below ground.

In assessing these various requirements and looking to find an appropriate balance between operational and environmental factors, a sequential approach to site selection has been adopted. Site sharing, utilisation of existing buildings and structures have been explored to best meet the operational need whilst minimising environmental impact. This assessment has shown that there are no options that exist.

Thus, in this case, a smart metering radio mast located to the side of the Village Hall building off the B6341 is needed to provide coverage to the settlement of Elsdon.

Pre-Application Consultation

Information on Arqiva's planned SMN was provided to the Council on 18 December 2013. Further pre-application consultation in relation to the application site was undertaken with your Authority and Ward Councillors Steven Bridgett and Elsdon Parish Council. At the time of submission there has been no response to this pre-application consultation.

Compliance with Planning Policy and other Material Planning Considerations

Policy at national level is set out in the NPPF. The NPPF views high quality communications infrastructure and systems as essential for achieving sustainable development objectives. This policy has especial emphasis for the SMN, which is a crucial part of a programme required by Government to help reduce power usage and lower greenhouse emissions across Great Britain.

At local level, relevant policy within the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) (2009) have been taken

into account. A sensitive approach has been adopted to ensure an appropriate balance has been struck between operational and environmental considerations to result in a development that is acceptable in all respects. In addition, the fact that the development is part of a programme being specifically required by Government in the wider public interest must carry great weight as a material consideration.

The site chosen is designated as being within the Northumberland National Park and the land designation is considered to be a material consideration and Policy 28 – Utilities and Infrastructure applies. Although this framework might constrain conventional forms of development, it well understood that existing communities must be served by the infrastructure and utilities essential to a modern society. The sensitive and balanced approach towards siting does however mean that all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise any perceived visual and environmental impact, whilst still providing the necessary radio coverage for the SMN and satisfying the other operational criteria.

ICNIRP Compliance

The proposed antennas comply with all relevant health and safety requirements, in accordance with ICNIRP guidelines. A certificate of compliance has been provided with this application.

Servicing and Maintenance

Periodic access will be required to the site for maintenance and servicing visits. This will be restricted to authorised personnel only, and therefore the proposal does not give rise to any issues associated with public access.

In conclusion, the proposed development has been sited and designed with reference to pre-application consultation in order to locate the development as sensitively as practicable. Specific consideration has been given to technical requirements and national and local planning policy. The proposal is part of an important Government initiative and is supported by both local and national planning policy. Having regard to all the relevant material considerations the proposal merits support and the application

should be permitted, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of the application made in respect of development proposed on land at Northumbrian Quality Feeds, Easington Farm, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7EG as part of a new Smart Metering Network (SMN) that is required by Government.
- 1.2 As shown in detail in the drawings submitted, the development proposes the installation of a very slim-line radio mast, 12 metres high (antenna centre-line top height 13.15m), with a small and unobtrusive antenna configuration at the top, which has been well designed to blend into the existing street scene. The mast, therefore, is similar in appearance to other forms of street furniture that are typically located within many small rural and semi-rural villages such as street lighting columns, although in this case a need to be taller to provide the necessary radio coverage to premises within the settlement. A small equipment cabinet is also proposed at ground level and again, will not be dissimilar to similar utility street apparatus such as those used by BT to provide broadband connectivity.
- 1.3 Arqiva is an Electronic Communications Code Operator and so benefits from the right set out in Paragraph 9 of the Electronic Communications Code to carry out street works. The Electronic Communications Code is found at Schedule 2 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, as amended. Arqiva also benefits from the permitted development rights set out under Part 16 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended. Hence in this case, the application is made under the Prior Approval procedures set out under Conditions A.2 and A.3 of Part 16.
- 1.4 In this statement, which incorporates the design and access statement, we go on to highlight the role of the development proposed, within the context of the SMN required by Government. We explain the benefits associated with the SMN, to explain the particular need in this case and to demonstrate compliance with

planning policy. We also provide information on health and safety and related issues by way of further reassurance.

2. THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE SMART METER NETWORK

- 2.1 The proposed development forms part of the SMN that Arqiva has been appointed by the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) to implement in the north of England and Scotland. Arqiva has been selected by DECC because it is an existing electronic communications code network operator, already responsible for much of the UK's critical communications, for example, the terrestrial television broadcast network and much of the radio broadcast network. Smart Metering is a Government programme to roll out, between 2014 and 2020, smart electricity and gas meters to homes and small businesses across Great Britain. The smart meter initiative is a key part of the Government's programme to cut greenhouse gas emissions, decarbonise the economy and support the creation of new green jobs and technologies.
- 2.2 A key feature of Smart Meters is that they are continuously connected to data centres to provide and manage the constant flow of data and functionality. Smart Meters must therefore be linked to an electronic communications network. The actual Smart Meters are being installed in premises by the gas and electricity utilities who supply the customers. The Smart Meters must therefore be supported by a new SMN and DECC has awarded the contract to implement this across Great Britain to Arqiva and Telefonica. Arqiva has been selected by DECC to be its implementation partner responsible for deploying and managing the SMN in Scotland and northern England, whilst Telefonica will provide the network to the remainder of Great Britain.
- 2.3 This new SMN will be a 'Wide Area Network' and is a key project in the UK's National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016 – 2021. When complete, it will form part of the UK's Critical National Infrastructure. Its deployment and timely delivery is particularly important to achieving a sustainable economy and meeting key

Government priorities enshrined in the Climate Change Act 2008, and thereby support the transformation to a low carbon economy.

2.4 In due course, the SMN will also be available to water utilities and in similar fashion, consumers will be better able to understand and make informed choices about their use of this natural resource to help reduce consumption and waste.

2.5 The proposed development and the wider SMN will, therefore, make a significant contribution towards sustainable development objectives which will help the UK Government to meet its target of reducing emissions by at least 80% on 1990 levels by 2050 and now set down within the UK Carbon Plan. This is relevant to the statutory duty already placed upon local planning authorities under Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and now accentuated by the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). More specifically, it will help to deliver the aspirations set out in Sections 5 and 10 of the NPPF.

2.6 Having regard to the Government's three key dimensions for sustainable development within the NPPF, smart metering will in particular assist in the following ways:

- **An economic role** – smart metering communications will help businesses to be energy conscious, smarter and invest in more energy efficient infrastructure to reduce longer term running costs. Consequential spin offs will, among many, be the creation of new green jobs and technologies, modern and cleaner industries and help stimulate retail sales in more efficient appliances.
- **A social role** - modern smart metering communications will allow consumers to benefit from real time information on their energy consumption, to help them control energy use, save money and reduce emissions. With greater visibility and understanding of their energy consumption, consumers will be able to make more informed choices about which appliances to use and when. For example, a consumer

seeing the power consumption of a tumble dryer might be encouraged to use a washing line instead or perhaps to avoid operating it during peak periods of demand when pricing is higher.

- **An environmental role** – smart metering communications will help to reduce energy consumption at homes and premises and allow smarter working practices such as better energy management within larger businesses and incorporation of new efficient infrastructure into new developments. In this way modern smart metering communications will help ensure the prudent use of natural resources, alleviate energy waste, reduce carbon footprints and help the UK Government meet its energy emissions set within the UK Carbon Plan.

2.7 However, in order to make this important contribution to sustainable development objectives, the SMN has to be developed first and like all electronic communications networks, will need to be supported by an infrastructure of operational sites. This is no different than railway services, for example, being reliant on the associated infrastructure of lines and stations. In the next section, the particular network requirement from which this application stems is explained.

3. THE REQUIREMENT

- 3.1 Arqiva owns and operates the terrestrial radio and television broadcast networks. The company also owns most of the tower portfolio originally developed by T-Mobile (now part of Everything Everywhere) and has rights and manage other masts, towers and rooftops, developed or otherwise suitable for use for electronic communications. In total, Arqiva has access to over 16,000 sites around the UK, which is considerably in excess of the numbers available to any other electronic communications operator in the UK. Arqiva is also licensed to use the 412-414MHz spectrum that will be used as part of the Smart Meter network.
- 3.2 The SMN has been largely based around the utilisation of these existing and other communication sites, buildings and structures and where this has not been possible, new ground-based masts. This has allowed Arqiva to minimise the potential visual impact associated with the deployment of the new smart metering radio network, consistent with longstanding statutory and government policy requirements.
- 3.3 These main installations, known as 'macrocell' sites, provide the main umbrella of coverage to larger geographical areas and premises within those areas. However, there are still smaller settlements, peripheral areas and more remote locations that cannot be met by these main installations due to coverage constraints, often related to distance, topography or other environmental related factors. Hence, in order to provide more localised coverage to these areas, a secondary layer of smaller sites, known as *micro sites*, are required and these are generally physically smaller. The application is in relation to a site required for this secondary layer as explained in more detail below.

Site Selection

- 3.4 The micro and repeater sites are required to provide localised indoor coverage over very specific areas and so the siting parameters for coverage reasons are narrow.

3.5 The sites must also satisfy a range of operational criteria, such as good fibre connectivity, an existing power supply suitably high and resilient for an electronic communications network, a reasonable level of security, vehicular or pedestrian access for ongoing maintenance and security of tenure for the life of the SMN contract with DECC. In addition, the site must be capable of being constructed without undue constraints and avoiding undue environmental disturbance, that for example, might be associated with creating new access tracks and supplying new power runs above or below ground.

3.6 In assessing these various requirements and looking to find an appropriate balance between operational and environmental factors, a sequential approach to site selection has been adopted. Site sharing, utilisation of existing buildings and structures have been explored to best meet the operational need whilst minimising environmental impact.

3.7 The following sites were investigated as possible opportunities for meeting the specific localised coverage needs to the settlement but were found to be either unsuitable and/or unavailable or comparably no better than the chosen site.

Site Name and address	National Grid Reference	Reason for not choosing
Streetworks monopole at verge at B6341	E: 393652, N: 593233	This option was discounted from a planning perspective as it was felt that a streetworks monopole would be more visually intrusive for residential receptors at this location than for the site that has been put forward.
Streetworks monopole at verge at B6341	E: 393703, N: 593288	This option was discounted from a planning perspective as it was felt that a streetworks monopole would be more visually intrusive for residential receptors at this location than for the site that has been put forward.
Rooftop Antenna at St Cuthbert's Church	E: 393648, N: 593283	This option was discounted as the roof construction is not suitable for hosting an omni antenna and due to the Grade I listed status of the building.
Streetworks monopole adjacent	E: 393562,	This option was discounted from a

to Phone Box	N: 593201	planning perspective as it was felt that a streetworks monopole would be more visually intrusive for residential receptors at this location than for the site that has been put forward.
Streetworks monopole at verge to south of village	E: 393514, N: 592933	This option was discounted from a planning perspective as it was felt that a streetworks monopole would be more visually intrusive at this location than for the site that has been put forward.
Streetworks monopole at verge off Crawford Close	E: 393578, N: 593056	This option was discounted from a planning perspective as it was felt that a streetworks monopole would be more visually intrusive for residential receptors at this location than for the site that has been put forward.

3.8 The proposed installation at Elsdon will be well located and sufficiently close to the premises that the SMN will serve, particularly as the mast will operate as a communications hub, both transmitting radio signals but also with the need to collect data from smart meters installed within premises.

3.9 To help illustrate this in the context of this application, a coverage plot is provided. This tends to exaggerate true levels of coverage on the ground, because the modelling only takes into broad account general topography and manmade features. However, they are a useful tool for explaining how the new installation will fit into the SMN planned and being implemented in the wider area.

3.10 Our conclusion is that the best balance between environmental and operational considerations is provided by using a specially designed structure at the application site, sufficiently close to / set amongst the properties that need to be served. This is the reason for the application before you.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH PLANNING POLICY

4.1 The relevant planning policy framework that has been taken into account and in part already alluded to is found principally within:

- The Development Plan

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England

4.2 These documents provide the overall policy background for electronic communications development, site specific policies and the key considerations relevant to the siting and design of appropriate electronic communications development. A further major consideration is that the SMN of which the proposed development will form part is a Government initiative based wholly upon the drive to reduce power consumption and green- house emissions and so support sustainable objectives. This initiative is therefore rooted in the same principles that now run through every seam of national and local policy.

The National Planning Policy Context

4.3 The general policy context can be summarised as follows:

- Government policy within the NPPF is to support high quality communications infrastructure and systems – this is especially relevant to smart metering, which is a Government initiative
- Government policy is to keep the inevitable environmental impact associated with electronic communications development to a minimum
- The best way to minimise environmental impact is to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of new radio masts and sites
- The starting point for planning new networks or the expansion of existing networks is therefore to use existing electronic communications sites
- Where new installations are required, as in this case, operators should look to develop well designed structures, such as those designed to blend in with the street scene or local setting

4.4 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. 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, new nationally important infrastructure such as the SMN.

- 4.5 The importance of the proposed development as part of the SMN 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.
- 4.6 The development proposed is comparatively small scale, well sited and well designed 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:
- a. Paragraph 14 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”*;
 - b. Paragraph 17 advises that planning should *“proactively drive and support sustainable development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, **infrastructure** and thriving local places that the country needs”* [our emphasis];
 - c. Paragraph 187, on “decision-taking” states that authorities should *“look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”*.
- 4.7 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF further states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the planning system and, in respect

of decision-taking, this means that both the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) (2009) and the NPPF are relevant and 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.

Section 5 - Supporting Advanced Communications Infrastructure of the NPPF

- 4.8 The proposal is supported by, and accords with, the guidance in Section 5 of the NPPF, which provides further guidance on the Government's objective of providing high quality communications networks in England.
- 4.9 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 has to include an understanding of the associated special problems and technical needs of developing communications networks such as the Smart Meter network.

Section 7 – Requiring Good Design of the NPPF

- 4.10 Government places great importance on the design of the built environment and paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that this is an integral objective of achieving sustainable development. The careful approach taken to the design and siting of the proposed development complies fully with this general policy objective.
- 4.11 More specifically, the proposal is supported by the guidance in paragraph 65 of the NPPF, which states that:

'Local Planning Authorities should not refuse planning permission for buildings or infrastructure which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design (unless the concern relates to a designated heritage asset and the impact would cause material harm to the asset or its setting which is not outweighed by the proposal's economic, social and environmental benefits).''

- 4.12 In respect of this guidance, all reasonable steps have been taken through careful siting and design to minimise the visual impact of the development, so far as the technical and operational constraints allow. The proposal is an acceptable design solution that will not have any material impact on a designated heritage asset.

Site Specific Policies

- 4.13 Section 11 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' of the NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for the protection of a range of landscapes and habitats. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to the objective conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks as one of the three specified areas that enjoy the highest level of landscape protection in England. Similar guidance is provided in the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) (2009) Policy 28 relating to utilities and infrastructure.
- 4.14 It is for this reason that paragraph 116 of the Framework advises that planning permission for major developments in an AONB/National Park should be refused except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that they are in the wider public interest. In considering this guidance, it should be noted that electronic communications installations, especially of the type proposed are relatively small-scale engineering operations and, therefore, cannot reasonably be considered to be major developments.

4.15 Notwithstanding this point, the proposed development has wider public benefits and it does not offend any of the three criteria listed in paragraph 116:

- It forms part of the SMN, a nationally important infrastructure project that forms part of the UK's National Infrastructure Plan. As explained in the Site Selection section of this statement the application site has been properly chosen having regard to the special technical and operational factors as well as environmental and town planning considerations;
- In this case, the required coverage area is a localised part of the National Park and so must be sited within it, as is usual with all other infrastructure necessary to serve the local population;
- All reasonable steps have been taken, through careful siting and design, to avoid any material or widespread visual impact, having regard to technical and operational factors.

4.16 Northumberland National Park Authority does have a specific telecommunications policy and therefore the siting and design should be assessed against the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) (2009) Policy 28 relating to utilities and infrastructure.

Policy 28 – Utilities and Infrastructure states:

The development of utilities and infrastructure projects which serve local community and business needs will be supported provided that:

- a. The proposal does not have an unacceptable impact upon the landscape quality or character, either individually or in combination with other proposals;

- b. The siting and appearance of the proposed development seeks to minimise impact on the special qualities of the National Park;
- c. Where electricity distribution lines are required, they are undergrounded or, where the Authority is satisfied that this is not feasible, they follow a route of least impact;
- d. Where the proposal relates to telecommunications development:
 - the need for the development should be demonstrated in terms of the operator's network;
 - if proposing a new mast, applicants should demonstrate that they have explored the sites outside the National Park, and if this is not possible, they have looked at the possibility of erecting apparatus on existing buildings, masts or other structures; and
 - where new apparatus are required it must be sensitively designed in order to minimise the impact of the development on the special qualities of the National Park.

Utilities and infrastructure developments which are to serve wider than local needs will be regarded as major development.

The proposed development at the site seeks to ensure the height and mass of the design is as sympathetic to its surrounds, being specified with the lowest height and mass that is technically possible, with a design that seeks to maintain and preserve the location's character whilst delivering the level of service needed in this location. As such it is considered the proposed development would accord with the principles of the Development Plan policies.

- 4.17 In summary, the sensitive way the development proposed has been conceived and brought forward accords with best practice and forms part of a national important infrastructure project to provide smart metering services to the local

area. It accords with the key policy objectives at national level, which are reflected in the relevant policies at local level. The development proposed is, therefore, acceptable in principle and also accords with the more detailed guidance expressed in local policy.

5. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 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 determination this section provides a description of the process adopted in the design of the proposals and explains the access considerations. The significant contribution such development makes towards sustainable development objectives have already been outlined earlier.

Physical Context

- 5.2 The proposed site is situated on the southern side of the Elsdon Village Hall adjacent to the perimeter fence. The proposed installation is an ultra slim line streetworks style pole of 12m in height supporting 3 no. small scale antennas above, the largest of which is 1.5m high.

The site has been carefully selected in a position capable of providing the necessary coverage whilst being situated as far away as possible from the views of local residential properties. The site is within the grounds of the village hall on the eastern edge of the settlement area and is overlooked by open fields to the south. The proposed ultra slim monopole will have similar lines to the nearby telegraph poles and timber power transmission support poles. The colouring of the equipment can be specified to enhance these merging effects and the pole will not appear as an incongruous feature when viewed in the context of the existing nearby vertical structures.

The visual effects have been further reduced by specifying the narrowest available profile of pole and by keeping height down to the absolute minimum capable of providing the required essential SMN coverage. It is also worth stating that the ancillary equipment enclosure and meter pillar are of very small proportions, being significantly smaller than the equipment cabinets found within the street environment.

Amount, Design, Layout and Scale of the Development

- 5.3 The scale, layout and design of the development has been guided by the special technical and operational factors affecting the need to provide an acceptable level of coverage to the local area, having regard to the need to minimise visual impact, which have been explained in the previous sections of this statement.
- 5.4 For example, the height of the mast, the numbers of antennas and their size, is the minimum amount of development required to provide coverage for the smart meter network. The mast, a very simple, slimline pole design supporting three antennas, has been chosen as this is of similar appearance to other types of man-made vertical structures such as streetlights, that are a common feature of townscapes and landscapes across the UK.
- 5.5 The same design considerations apply to the equipment cabinet, which is of similar size and design to other types of roadside cabinets commonly found in urban and rural areas. The location of the equipment cabinets, and the electronic communications equipment housed within them, reflects the technical and operational requirement to be in reasonable proximity to the antenna systems they support.

Access Considerations

- 5.6 The installation is proposed to be installed to the side of the village hall building with off-street parking available within close proximity.
- 5.7 Once constructed, the development will be unmanned requiring only periodic visits about once every two to three months for routine maintenance and servicing. The site will be easy to access for this purpose and typical visits will be by an engineer using a light vehicle that will be parked lawfully nearby.

Landscaping

- 5.8 In view of the nature of the development which already looks to best utilise existing screening and with similar vertical lines to nearby telegraph poles and

timber power transmission poles, a scheme of hard or soft landscaping is not considered necessary or appropriate in this case. The development is similar to other man-made utility and communication structures commonly found in street locations without dedicated associated landscaping.

Appearance

- 5.9 The sensitive approach to siting and design should minimise the appearance of the development proposed. In addition, the local topography and natural features should help minimise views. Insofar as the mast and equipment cabinet may be visible, they should look straight forward in appearance and reflect their function. To that extent they should in time become accepted features of the local environment as with other forms of communications networks and essential public utility infrastructure.

6. ICNIRP COMPLIANCE

- 6.1 A certificate confirming compliance with the relevant ICNIRP guidelines on public exposure has been supplied with this application. Accordingly, as explained within the NPPF, it is not necessary, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them, which include the perception of risk.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed development forms part of Arqiva's planned Smart Meter network, which is being created as part of the government's initiative to roll out smart electricity and gas meters to homes and small businesses across Great Britain between 2014 and 2020. The network forms part of the UK's National Infrastructure Plan and the information provided by smart meters will help consumers to better manage and reduce energy use and potentially save money. Smart meters will play an important role in the government's policies to achieve a transition to a sustainable and low-carbon economy.
- 7.2 The use of the application site looks to provide the best balance between operational and environmental considerations. The site is located so that it can provide the required level of coverage to the properties it needs to serve, and the use of an innovatively designed slim line structure will ensure that it appears similar to other street furniture commonly found within the street scene. The design and appearance of the structure should, therefore, be acceptable.
- 7.3 This statement has demonstrated that the proposal is in accordance with national policy set out in the NPPF and its detail complies with local policy objective of minimising potential environmental impact.
- 7.4 In conclusion, the application merits support and there are no material considerations that indicate otherwise.