Consultation response form

This is the response form for the consultation on the draft revised National Planning Policy Framework. If you are responding by email or in writing, please reply using this questionnaire pro-forma, which should be read alongside the consultation document. The comment boxes will expand as you type. Required fields are indicated with an asterisk (*)

Your details

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Are the views expressed on this consultation your own personal views or an official response from an organisation you represent?*

Please select an item from this drop down menu

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please select the option which best describes your organisation. *

Please select an item from this drop down menu

If you selected other, please state the type of organisation

Trade association

Please provide the name of the organisation (if applicable)

Mobile UK (www.mobileuk.org)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Question 1

Do you have any comments on the text of Chapter 1?

About Mobile UK

Mobile UK is the trade association for the UK's mobile network operators - EE, O2, Three and Vodafone. As mobile increasingly becomes the device of choice for running daily life both at home and at work, customers seek improvements to coverage, more capacity and greater capabilities. Our goal is to realise the power of mobile to improve the lives of our customers and the prosperity of the UK as a whole.

Our role is to identify the barriers to progress, seek solutions and work with all relevant parties to bring about change, be they Government, regulators, industry, consumers or citizens more generally.

Mobile UK welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Government's consultation on revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The planning policy framework is extremely important to the mobile industry; it provides vital context and guidance against which local planning authorities take decisions on operators' proposals for new sites (and alterations to existing sites).

The context in which Mobile UK's frames its responses are the people rely more and more on mobile connectivity.

Introduction

Mobile connectivity, and the planning framework that supports it, must to be treated with every bit as much importance as other forms of digital connectivity. The NPPF must give a clear policy steer that will lend significant weight to positive planning determinations, including sensitive areas (of which there are many in England).

At the present time, there are about 35,000 cell sites throughout the UK (i.e. the masts, rooftop antennas or other installations that transmit to and receive signals from mobile devices).

Several thousand of these sites are deployed to achieve basic coverage across the UK and the balance are needed to add capacity to the network. (With a given amount of licensed radio spectrum any one site has a maximum capacity – i.e ability to handle a given number of telephone calls and data download simultaneously). With the advent of the fourth generation (4G) of mobile technology, customers demand for mobile data has grown rapidly and mobile operators have had to upgrade their networks continually by adding new sites for capacity.

While network operators have achieved a good level of network coverage where people live and work, they are under considerable pressure from Government and others to increase coverage in

the much harder to reach places along the roads, along the railways and in the deeply rural areas, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). People now expect mobile connectivity wherever they are. Moreover, the sustainability of facilities such as National Parks and National Trust Properties is increasingly dependent on there being good mobile connectivity; people are much less willing to work in or visit locations where connectivity is poor.

While obtaining planning permission is only one of the problems that mobile operators encounter when trying to cover such areas, it is extremely important that the NPPF is supportive when planning applications are submitted to improve mobile connectivity.

In addition, in the near future, mobile operators expect to be deploying the fifth generation of mobile technology (5G). In densely populated places – in urban areas, along trunk routes etc. – it is expected that there will be a greatly increased number of cell sites. These will be 'small cells', with antennas that will perhaps be of similar dimensions to burglar alarm boxes. They will not be mounted on masts or rooftops but on street furniture (telegraph poles, lamp-posts, bus stops, traffic lights etc.), so as to be much closer to the devices they connect to. Such devices will increasingly be 'things' as well as smartphones and tablets – cars, smart meters, remote telemetry, medical devices and many other applications.

The applications that will be enabled by 5G are expected have a very positive impact on the economy and also the environment, as applications such as pollution monitoring, road pricing and responsive traffic control will serve to reduce pollution in our urban areas.

This large network of small cells will also have to be supported by extensive fibre 'backhaul' networks. Thus, the planning framework must continue to support the roll-out of the fixed network also.

In summary, the benefits of modern digital connectivity are very significant for the UK's economy and our global competitiveness. The NPPF is an absolutely crucial piece of the puzzle that can stimulate a positive and proactive approach to enabling the deployment of our future networks.

Chapter 2: Achieving sustainable development

Question 2

Do you agree with the changes to the sustainable development objectives and the presumption in favour of sustainable development?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 3

Do you agree that the core principles section should be deleted, given its content has been retained and moved to other appropriate parts of the Framework?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 4

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 2, including the approach to providing additional certainty for neighbourhood plans in some circumstances?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 3: Plan-making

Question 5

Do you agree with the further changes proposed to the tests of soundness, and to the other changes of policy in this chapter that have not already been consulted on?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Chapter 3 Plan Making

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and strategic policy makers must give consideration to and reflect how modern mobile telecommunications services are vital to the overall sustainability of designated areas and development proposals.

Moreover, large designations and developments will generally have an impact upon existing mobile networks; new residential or commercial populations will create demands on the mobile network that were not present before – this is something that they need to start giving weight to in plan making, so that additional mobile provision can be factored in and optimised in co-operation with a developer and any other interested or impacted parties.

In writing local and strategic policy, and land designations within development plans, plan writers and decision makers should holistically and strategically consider the need for mobile and fixed communications infrastructure provision to sustain designation/development proposals and how this is going to be delivered.

Question 6

Do you have any other comments on the text of chapter 3?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 4: Decision-making

Question 7

The revised draft Framework expects all viability assessments to be made publicly available. Are there any circumstances where this would be problematic?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 8

Would it be helpful for national planning guidance to go further and set out the circumstances in which viability assessment to accompany planning applications would be acceptable?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here:

Click here to enter text.

Question 9

What would be the benefits of going further and mandating the use of review mechanisms to capture increases in the value of a large or multi-phased development?

Please enter your comments below

Click here to enter text.

Question 10

Do you have any comments on the text of Chapter 4?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 5: Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Question 11

What are your views on the most appropriate combination of policy requirements to ensure that a suitable proportion of land for homes comes forward as small or medium sized sites?

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 12

Do you agree with the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development where delivery is below 75% of the housing required from 2020?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 13

Do you agree with the new policy on exception sites for entry-level homes?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 14

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 5?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy

Question 15

Do you agree with the policy changes on supporting business growth and productivity, including the approach to accommodating local business and community needs in rural areas?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Chapter 6 Building a strong competitive economy

Referencing back to the introduction to Mobile UK's response, a mention of how mobile (and fixed) connectivity is an economic driver would be a significant improvement, particularly as it relates to driving growth in the rural economy.

Moreover, 5G connectivity is expected to enable a number of applications in the agricultural sector (e.g. more accurate/cost effective crop spraying and irrigation strategies). Mobile connectivity is also very important for supporting tourism.

The Government and Ofcom have both indicated that they will impose further 'mobile coverage' obligations on mobile operators, because of the importance of mobile connectivity to the rural economy and community. The NPPF should be consistent with such obligations.

Question 16

Do you have any other comments on the text of chapter 6?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Question 17

Do you agree with the policy changes on planning for identified retail needs and considering planning applications for town centre uses?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 18

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 7?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities

Question 19

Do you have any comments on the new policies in Chapter 8 that have not already been consulted on?

Chapter 8 Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

Mobile infrastructure provides a service which allows parents to keep track of their children, elderly people to avoid isolation and, most significantly in relation to this chapter, allows everyone access to emergency services no matter where they are. This is a clear material social benefit. Weight should be given to how our proposals facilitate safe communities and how it can be alluded to in this chapter.

Question 20

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 8?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 9: Promoting sustainable transport

Question 21

Do you agree with the changes to the transport chapter that point to the way that all aspects of transport should be considered, both in planning for transport and assessing transport impacts?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Chapter 9 – 'Promoting Sustainable Transport'

Mobile infrastructure is vital for supporting sustainable modern transport networks. As covered in our introduction, there is still much to be done in extending mobile coverage onto the road and rail network, so that customers can access the connectivity they now expect and require to support productive work practices.

In the near future, with 5G and the internet of things (IoT), mobile infrastructure will be required to support connected and autonomous vehicles (CAV). As such, this chapter should mention the importance of existing transport infrastructure being covered with modern mobile communications. LPA should consider proposals for mobile infrastructure that serve the needs of the UK's transport network.

Question 22

Do you agree with the policy change that recognises the importance of general aviation facilities?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 23

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 9?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 10: Supporting high quality communications

Question 24

Do you have any comments on the text of Chapter 10?

Chapter 10 Supporting high quality communications

With regards to the telecoms specific policy at Chapter 10, the wording is positive and supportive in pointing out the economic importance of modern connectivity. In addition, it would relevant and important rto mention that the wording could be even more supportive for not just the economic benefits, but the associated social benefits too. England needs world class digital connectivity from London to Cumbria and more forthright wording could be used to get that across.

The NPPF came out in 2012 but since then the political pressure and customer demand around the need for efficient modern mobile telecoms across England has intensified significantly,

For example, the 2015 Budget Productivity Plan, which committed to looking at the Permitted Development regulations in England, the BIG Infrastructure Group Report in 2016, the actual PD changes in 2016, the 2016 David Cameron Parliamentary speech around the need for change to promote connectivity (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35765256), the 2016 House of Commons debate and Release around the MIP Project and how to improve telecoms rollout, and the numerous Ofcom reports in the time since the initial NPPF came out in 2012, all allude to the rising pressure. The minor change to the working in the draft NPPF does not go nearly far enough in terms of keeping pace with the changing context.

The revised NPPF policy needs to be much more forthright in its wording around the support, positive consideration and positive weight attached to mobile telecommunications proposals – in all situations, in protected landscapes, in green belts, near heritage assets, near residential areas etc etc – they all need mobile connectivity so decision makers need to appreciate that, while a certain amount of visual impact is unavoidable, the connectivity requirements deliver an overriding benefit.

On a point of detail, at point (a) of paragraph 114, the draft framework states:

"a) they have evidence to demonstrate that telecommunications infrastructure is not expected to cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, air traffic services or instrumentation operated in the national interest"

While this situation does not arise often, when it does, it needs to be properly handled by

organisations that have the relevant expertise in an extremely complex field – that is Ofcom, who have a direct parliamentary remit to keep the radio spectrum clear of unwarranted interference.

Ofcom assign spectrum and frequency to the operators and other spectrum users nationally via licence. Mobile operators have to work in that spectrum. It is the remit of Ofcom to regulate that, not the planning system. As such, the revised NPPF policy need to make clear the difference between physical interference (i.e. when a mast/infrastructure may physically another's radio signal) and radio interference, as only the physical element is the remit of planning.

One further point – The Permitted Devlopment Regulations were amended in Nov 2016 to extend permitted emergency timescales to 18 months from 12 months.. As such, LAs should be sympathetic to, and understanding of, the necessity for emergency equipment to maintain continuity of network coverage while issues (such as responding to a Notice to Quit) are addressed.

In the accompanying Glossary, text could be inserrted that explains what an emergency is in this context:

"emergency works", in relation to the operator or a relevant undertaker for the purposes of paragraph XX, means works the execution of which at the time it is proposed to execute them is requisite in order to put an end to, or prevent, the arising of circumstances then existing or imminent which are likely to cause –

(a) Danger to persons or property;
(b) The interruption of any service provided by the operators network, or as the case may be, interference with the exercise of any functions conferred or imposed on the undertaker by or under any enactment;
or,
(c) Substantial loss to the operator or, as the case may be, the undertaker, and such works as in all circumstances it is reasonable to execute with those works"

Chapter 11: Making effective use of land

Question 25
Do you agree with the proposed approaches to under-utilised land, reallocating land for other uses and making it easier to convert land which is in existing use?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 26
Do you agree with the proposed approach to employing minimum density standards where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 27
Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 11?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 12 : Achieving well-designed places

Question 28

Do you have any comments on the changes of policy in Chapter 12 that have not already been consulted on?

Click here to enter text.

Question 29

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 12?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 13: Protecting the Green Belt

Question 30

Do you agree with the proposed changes to enable greater use of brownfield land for housing in the Green Belt, and to provide for the other forms of development that are 'not inappropriate' in the Green Belt?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Chapter 13 Protecting the Green Belt

Paragraphs 144 or 145 list those developments that are not inappropriate in a green belt. Telecommunications infrastructure should also be on this list, as development is often required within the green belt given rural, open, areas still need service and the Government expect the whole landmass of the county to be covered with efficient mobile connectivity. Single, appropriately sited, mobile base stations also do not harm the openness of the greenbelt and as such preserve the principle of green belt designation.

Furthermore, given the principle of the development in green belt is established under permitted development rights, policy should make clear that for applications for prior approval in the green belt the principle of the development should not be questioned. A paragraph to that effect should be added.

Question 31

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 13?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Question 32

Do you have any comments on the text of Chapter 14?

> **Chapter 14 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change**
>
> **A significant change in modern work practices is increased amount people that now work at home (ONS data state 14% of the workforce, and the amount of travel that is cut out by face to face remote conference calling etc. All this is supported by improved communications connectivity and this should be referenced.**

Question 33

Does paragraph 149b need any further amendment to reflect the ambitions in the Clean Growth Strategy to reduce emissions from building?

> Click here to enter text.

Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Question 34

Do you agree with the approach to clarifying and strengthening protection for areas of particular environmental importance in the context of the 25 Year Environment Plan and national infrastructure requirements, including the level of protection for ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

> **Chapter 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment**
>
> **There should be a paragraph in here that discusses how these areas still need modern connectivity and the infrastructure that provides it. LPAs must balance this need for landscape**

protection with the need for mobile connectivity (looking at it holistically with Chapters 10 and 6, which discusses the importance of rural economy) and consideration given to the constraints attached that infrastructure in the context of the difficult constraints the natural environment and sensitive landscapes create – topography, backhaul and power difficulties etc etc.

Question 35

Do you have any other comments on the text of Chapter 15?

Click here to enter text.

Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Question 36

Do you have any comments on the text of Chapter 16?

Chapter 16 The Historic Environment

Mobile UK supports the changes to the chapter on conserving and enhancing the Historic Environment, in particular the clarification and retention of the reference to the degrees of harm attached to proposals that effect Heritage Assets and how weight should be attached to public benefit in particular circumstances.

Chapter 17: Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

Question 37

Do you have any comments on the changes of policy in Chapter 17, or on any other aspects of the text in this chapter?

Click here to enter text.

Question 38

Do you think that planning policy in minerals would be better contained in a separate document?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 39

Do you have any views on the utility of national and sub-national guidelines on future aggregates provision?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Transitional arrangements and consequential changes

Question 40

Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 41

Do you think that any changes should be made to the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites as a result of the proposed changes to the Framework set out in the consultation document? If so, what changes should be made?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Question 42

Do you think that any changes should be made to the Planning Policy for Waste as a result of the proposed changes to the Framework set out in the consultation document? If so, what changes should be made?

Please select an item from this drop down menu

Please enter your comments here

Click here to enter text.

Glossary

Question 43

Do you have any comments on the glossary?

Click here to enter text.