

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**Erection and siting of fibre exchange
telecommunications infrastructure to provide a
full fibre (gigabit) to the premises service**

at

**Gedney Victory Hall, Chapelgate,
Holbeach, PE12 0BJ**

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1.0 Introduction

Murray Planning Associates has been instructed by UPP Ltd to prepare and submit a planning application for the installation of fibre exchange infrastructure necessary to operate a full fibre (gigabit) internet service in the Holbeach area. The infrastructure is to be located on land within the grounds of Gedney Victory Hall, in the settlement of Chapelgate.

The application has not been discussed with the Council through any pre-application enquiry.

This statement sets out 1) an assessment of the site context; 2) a summary of the relevant policy framework; 3) an assessment of the proposed development; followed by 4) conclusions based on the preceding sections.

This statement should be read in alongside the following documents and drawings:

- Site Location Plan
- Block Plan
- Proposed Floor Plan
- Proposed Elevations
- Proposed Site Plan
- CIL Form
- Application Forms & Ownership Certificates

2.0 Site Context

The site comprises an area of developed land that forms part of a car park serving Gedney Victory Hall, a community facility located within the settlement of Chapelgate.

The site lies within an urban setting, and on the southern edge of the settlement boundary. The A17 trunk road lies to the south of the site, while the B1359 lies to the east, and extends to the north of the site, providing access to the car park serving the hall. Other than the hall, the site lies within residential surroundings.



Aerial view of the site and surroundings, with the approximate boundaries of the application site annotated in red

The site is generally well screened from the surroundings by mature trees and landscaping. In particular, there is a limited vantage point towards the site from the B1359 to the east, as a result of a number of mature trees and an

embankment, resulting in the site being at a lower level than the road. The site is more open in aspect from the north, as the landscape screening reduces.



Above: View from the B1359 (dated September 2021) looking south towards the car park serving Gedney Victory Hall where the development will be located

Below: Close up view of the site



Relevant Planning History

A review of the planning application register reveals there have been no recent planning applications made at the site.

3.0 Planning Policy Assessment

Policy Context

The site is located within the South Holland District Council administrative area.

At a local level, planning policies are contained within the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (adopted 2019).

National planning policy in the form of the Revised National Planning Policy Framework is also of relevance.

There are also some Government national policies and documents relating to the provision of faster internet connections that are considered a material consideration in the assessment of this application.

Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021)

Paragraph 2 of the NPPF notes that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Paragraph 11 advises that decisions (on planning applications) should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. As such, development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

Section 10 sets out guidance relating to supporting high quality communications. Paragraph 114 notes that advance high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. **Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation**

mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections

(our emphasis).

Paragraph 115 notes that where new sites are required (for communications infrastructure), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

Paragraph 118 advises that local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure.

Local Planning Policy – South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019)

In the context of the Adopted Local Plan, the site lies within the settlement boundary. The site lies within a wider area considered at risk of flooding. Granite House to the north-east of the site is recognised as a Grade II Listed Building.

There are no policies relating to telecommunications or high speed internet infrastructure within the local plan. As such, it is clear that the guidance within the NPPF takes precedence in establishing a principle of development.

A number of local plan policies are relevant to the site and the proposed development. Those being Policies 1, 2, 4, and 29. These policies are looked at in more detail below.

Policy 1 – This policy identifies that within settlement boundaries (including Gedney Black Lion End where the site is located), development will be permitted that supports their role as a service centre for the settlement itself,

helps sustain existing facilities or helps meet the service needs of other local communities.

Policy 2 – This policy sets out general guidance on design, noting that development should comply with a number of criteria. These criteria include ensuring that the size, scale, and layout of development are appropriate, while ensuring there is no adverse impact on trees, and the general character and appearance of the surroundings.

Policy 4 – This policy relates to flood risk, and confirms that development will be permitted within areas at risk of flooding subject to compliance with a number of criteria. Criteria 2 notes that one such justification for development in a flood zone is the provision of essential infrastructure that provides wider sustainability benefits to the community.

Policy 29 – This policy relates to the historic environment, and generally requires development to conserve the historic environment, and enhance it where appropriate. The policy goes on to note that proposals that affect the setting of a Listed Building will be supported where they preserve the significance of the Listed Building.

Other Policy Considerations

Central government are keen on ensuring that access to full fibre internet is sped up, and that Councils have their part to play in delivering the necessary infrastructure. This is detailed (among other documents) within the following:

1. Government press announcement 27/8/20¹... "Government ministers are calling on local councils to help ensure people can access better broadband and mobile connectivity crucial to the UK's coronavirus recovery". A summary of this announcement is as follows:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministers-call-on-councils-to-help-deliver-digital-connectivity-ambitions>

- Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman and Local Government Minister Simon Clarke have today written to local authorities setting out how they can help boost gigabit broadband rollout and 5G mobile coverage.
- Government ministers are calling on local councils to help ensure people can access better broadband and mobile connectivity crucial to the UK's coronavirus recovery
- We want to help people get access to fast and reliable connectivity. It is a top priority for this government.
- Councils have a vital role to play in the rollout of digital infrastructure and while there is good work going on up and down the country, there is more we can do.

2. OFCOM (UK telecommunications regulator) "Supercharging investment in fibre broadband" announcement 8/1/20², summarised as follows:

- As demand for internet data accelerates, the UK's infrastructure needs to be upgraded. Full-fibre broadband connections can deliver much faster speeds than copper – up to one gigabit per second. They are also up to five times more reliable, and less likely to slow down when lots of people use them at the same time.
- So today we are proposing new, flexible regulation that will help fuel a full-fibre future for the whole of the UK.
- Having a choice of networks has delivered significant benefits to people, such as innovation, better services and competitive prices. In 2017, we set out a range of pro-investment measures that kickstarted full fibre rollout by a range of broadband companies. Since then, full fibre coverage has trebled."

² <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2019/supercharging-investment-in-fibre-broadband>

3. Government manifesto pledge - "The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review - setting the UK's broadband targets"³. A relevant extract notes that "*The aim is to see 15 million premises connected to full fibre by 2025, with coverage across all parts of the country by 2033*".

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/building-digital-uk#the-future-telecoms-infrastructure-review---setting-the-uks-broadband-targets>

4.0 The Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises the development of a fibre exchange. The development will serve the surrounding area (including Holbeach and Long Sutton) and provide full fibre (gigabit) internet services to residents and businesses in the local area.

The applicant (UPP⁴) is rolling out a gigabit network across the east of England and East Midlands. They already operate in a number of towns in the East Anglia and East Midlands areas⁵.

The fibre exchange comprises the construction of a single fibre optic cabin unit. The cabin is small in scale, measuring approximately 3.04m x 2.235m, and is 2.71m in height. Access to the compound will be derived from the main access point to the hall, to the north of the cabin.

No boundary treatment around the cabin is proposed. All existing landscape features surrounding the site (including all mature trees) are to be retained in full.

Principle of Development

The development lies within an urban area and within a defined settlement boundary. As such, development on the site is acceptable in principle, given the built up surroundings. Furthermore, the principle of development is also established by guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 114 in particular).

The land the cabin is to be situated on is of no major amenity value, acting as an area of largely unused car park associated with the community hall.

⁴ <https://upp.com/portal/>

⁵ <https://upp.com/portal/locations>

Furthermore, the area of development is minimal, resulting in the majority of the car parking area associated with the hall being retained.

In addition, other government policy not related to planning (detailed above) confirms the need for local authorities to encourage the growth of full fibre infrastructure.

Given the benefits of the proposal to the wider area, it is considered that the loss of a small piece of infrequently used car park can be accepted on principle in this instance.

Scale & Appearance

The scale of the proposed development would be single storey in height. The built development is kept to the smallest operational size possible. At around 6.8 sq m, the cabin is clearly very small in scale in comparison with the built form of the surrounding built form.

The appearance (see photo below of the proposed cabin) is appropriate for the type of development proposed, while its impact has been reduced by ensuring development is largely screened from the surroundings by retaining the existing landscape features.



Example of the cabin that would be utilised. The finish is a light grey brickwork effect. The black section is installed underground so is not visible to the surroundings

Visual Impact & Trees

The site does not lie in sensitive surroundings, so far as built form is concerned. Other than a nearby Grade II Listed Building, most of the surroundings are of no particular architectural merit. The visual impact on the surroundings is minimal due to the site being largely enclosed by mature trees and landscaping, and the site as currently presented being part of a nondescript car park.

There are a number of mature trees in the vicinity of the site. However, the crown of the nearby trees does not extend over the site, and therefore the development is not considered likely to intrude into the root protection area of any of the nearby trees. No trees are to be removed (or pruned) as a result of the development proposal.

Flood Risk

The site lies within an extensive area (stretching several miles inland from The Wash) of land that is considered at risk of flooding.

In this case, the cabin is to be located on previously developed land. It will not result in the loss of any permeable surface, and therefore will not result in any potential increase to surface water flooding in the surrounding area.

Furthermore, Policy 4 of the local plan confirms that development that provides essential infrastructure to the community will be supported within areas at risk of flooding. It is considered the fibre exchange infrastructure would qualify as being essential in that the provision of access to high speed internet is already of great importance to many residents and businesses, and demand for such services is only likely to increase with time.

On balance, the location of the site on an area of previously developed land, the small scale/footprint of development, and the benefits of the development to the community offset the flood risk associated with the site.

Impact on Listed Building

There are two Grade II Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the site. One (The Old Manor House) lies to the north-west and is considered more than sufficient distance from the proposed development to ensure no adverse impact could be caused.

Granite House lies to the north-east of the site, and comprises a Grade II Listed Building. The Listing record is detailed below:

TF 42 SW 1514-/4/1 GEDNEY CHAPEL GATE (east side) Granite House

(formerly listed as Whiteacres, previously listed as Granite House)

26.11.87

II House. c.1700 with extensive late C19 alterations. Colourwashed rendered red brick. Slate roof. Two rear ridge stacks, each with two shafts and two lateral stacks. Moulded wooden eaves band. Decorative C19 bargeboards with pendant finials. Brick quoins. Set on a plinth. Two storeys, three bays west front with garret to south front. West front with outer single projecting gabled bays, the gables overhanging and supported on wooden brackets. Three cross glazing bar sashes on each floor, that to the ground floor left being slightly smaller. The three bay south side with single similar central projecting gabled bay, with doorway with part glazed door flanked by single margin sashes. Either side are single paired sashes. Three cross glazing bar sashes above with single similar smaller sash in the gable. The windows of the left single bay set into recessed panel. Interior has ornate C19 staircase.

It is considered that the screening on the eastern boundary of the site would obscure almost all views towards the Listed Building. In addition, there is a strong boundary treatment to the Listed Building (made up of mature trees and hedgerow), which would further prevent any significant adverse impact from the development on the Listed Building, especially taking into account the minimal scale of development proposed in this instance.

Parking & Traffic Generation

Once operational, it is anticipated that on average, a maximum of two visits per week would be needed (1-2 hours per day on site) for general maintenance purposes. As such, the level of parking is acceptable to serve the development.

Access to the site would be via the existing access point to the hall located to the north of the cabin. The maintenance vehicle will park in close proximity to the cabin. Maintenance visits are likely to be during the week, while the hall is presumably at its busiest during evenings and weekends. In any case

The level of traffic generated by the proposal is considered acceptable, and will barely be noticeable in comparison with the traffic movements associated with the various uses around the site.

Noise

Given the previously discussed traffic generation associated with the site, there will be little noise impact on the surroundings so far as traffic noise is concerned. The cabin will contain the noise of the equipment within.

Unlike some fibre exchange cabins, this development does not require the use of any air conditioning units. The development will therefore have no noise emissions that could adversely affect the surroundings.

Security

While the compound is not enclosed with any form of boundary treatment, the cabin is designed to be 'vandalism resistant'. In any case, the development does not stand out as an obvious target for any criminal activity.

5.0 Conclusions

The site is located on the southern outskirts of Chapelgate, and within a predominantly residential setting, though the site itself comprises a car park forming part of a community hall. The proposed development comprises the installation of fibre exchange infrastructure necessary to operate a gigabit full fibre internet service within the wider area (including Holbeach and Long Sutton).

The proposed scheme accords with the relevant development control policies in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), and aligns with the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. There is a clear principle of development for full fibre infrastructure such as that proposed in this instance, both through planning policy and other government policy as detailed above.

The scale of development is small, in comparison with the form of the built-up surroundings. The appearance is typical for infrastructure such as this, and the visual impact of the development is limited due to the mature trees and landscaping that envelop the site (particularly to the south and east).

The proposal will not result in the loss of any land in especially active use. Furthermore, the development will not harm the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed Building nor have any adverse impact so far as flood risk is concerned.

In summary, it is considered that the proposals are appropriate, are supported by planning policy and will not impact upon any interests of acknowledged importance. The proposal will bring considerable benefits to the wider area, and we therefore conclude the proposed development should be supported by the Council accordingly.