![RTPI Royal Town Planning Institute]

RTPI response to Proposed reforms to permitted development rights to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage

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About the RTPI

The Institute champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. As a learned society, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) uses its expertise and research to bring evidence and thought leadership to help shape planning policies and thinking. As a professional body, the Institute has over 25,000 members across all sectors, and is responsible for setting formal standards for planning practice and education. The RTPI welcomes this opportunity to make a submission in response.

General comments

We have several issues regarding the current deployment of 5G infrastructure under the current system where planning permission is required. There are clear risks to this situation worsening with the proposal to introduce permitted development rights, the following points explain this in more detail:

- Reducing opportunities for community participation, is likely to lead to strong resistance where developments appear without prior knowledge
- For example, the opposition to the visual amenity of the infrastructure is likely to be compounded by removing the democratic oversight
- The advantage of these applications going before a planning committee are that
  - The impact on those with visual impairments is properly assessed and appropriate safeguards implemented if necessary.
  - The need to provide sufficient wheelchair clearance is also an important matter requiring consideration.
- Engagement with the community would allow matters such as whether the infrastructure could be better disguised or routed underground to be properly explored
- It will be important that the agents promoting the work are required to engage with the community and address questions as and when they arise
- Proactive engagement at the early stage of proposals could help to reduce tensions and minimise unnecessary delay in the process if communities feel unsatisfactorily consulted
- It is unfortunate that the link provided in the consultation: The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Deployment in England (2016), Role of Mobile Operators available at: http://www.mobileuk.org/cms-assets/documents/259876-147086.code-of-best-practice-2016-edition-pub does not appear to be working.

Next steps

- We would welcome clarification regarding the timescale for the introduction of the changes and details on how community engagement around the proposals could be improved.