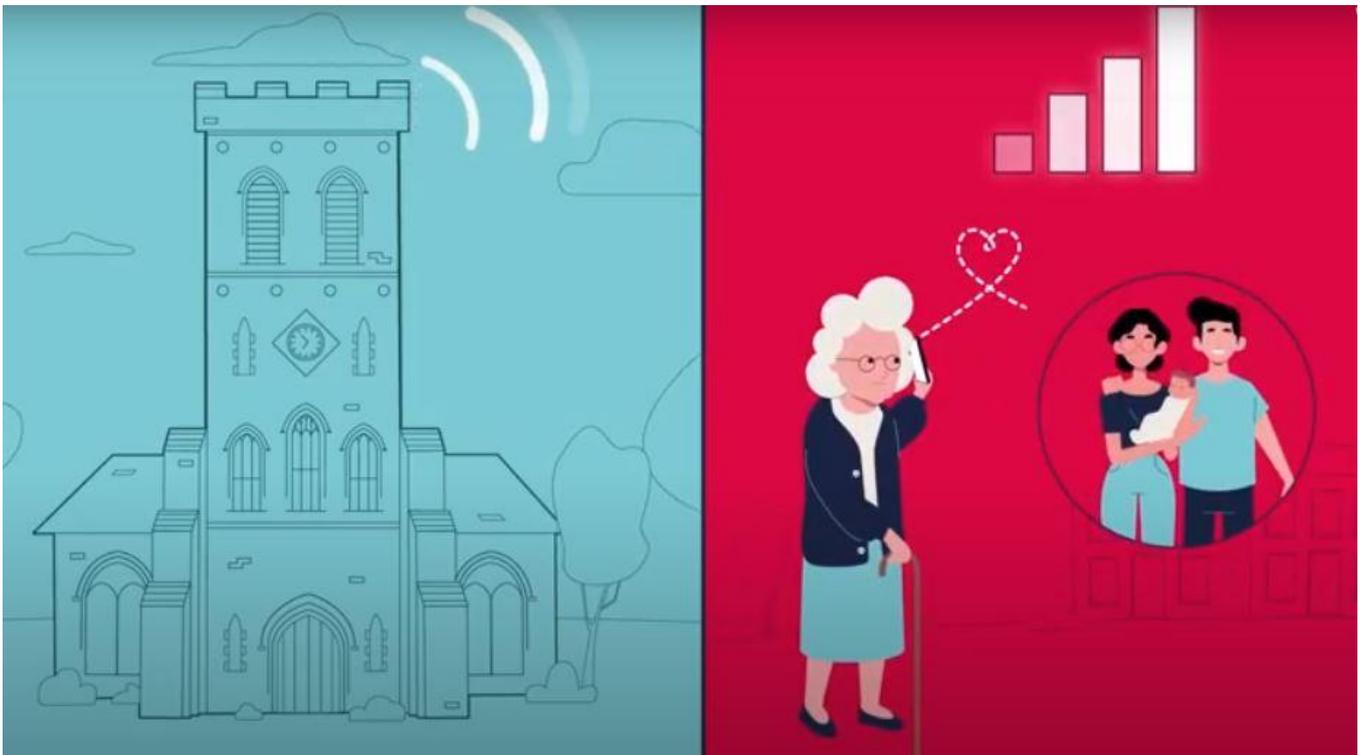


# Village Telecoms Proposal St Mary & St Bartholomew Church Cranborne

NET Ref: A07530 Date of Report: 28 September 2020  
Church Address: Church Street, Cranborne, Dorset BH21 5PP



Watch the full video at [www.netcs.co.uk](http://www.netcs.co.uk)



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## OPENRAN DESIGN FOR ST MARY & ST BARTHOLOMEW

Working closely with the CofE and CiW, OpenRAN equipment manufacturers and the Mobile Network Operators, NET CS have determined a technical solution to facilitate multiple MNO's cellular coverage at a fraction of the cost of a traditional standalone site.

In basic terms, an OpenRAN solution negates the requirement for up to 10m<sup>2</sup> of costly radio equipment cabinets being installed at each site; instead the MNOs core radio cabinets will be located at a centralise switch centre, which will be connected to each remote coverage site via the internet (Fibre based Broadband).

The equipment to be installed at each church site falls into three main elements:

### ANTENNAS

Every church is different, however in most instances because the antennas only measure 334mm wide x 260mm high x 136mm deep, NET CS are likely to propose to position the antennas on the face of the tower, such as within the castellation sections of the parapet, secured simply, if possible, with Stainless Straps i.e. no bolts, which along with the antennas will be wrapped in an exact vinyl image of the existing stonework. Or if high enough to provide coverage, NET CS will propose to locate the antennas behind the timber bell chamber louvres. NET CS will also install a small GPS antenna, the size off half a tennis ball, this must simply face skywards therefore could be fitted on the inside a parapet wall.

### RRU

The RRUs, measure approximately 300mm wide x 400mm long x 200mm deep.

Between the RRUs and each antenna, NET CS will need to install up to two cables measuring approximately 1.27cm in diameter/ The route of these cables will be church specific and will be determined using the principal design criteria i.e. the least impact on the fabric of the church building.

To minimise the routing of the coaxial cables, NET CS will identify a location for the RRUs which is as close as possible to the antennas, but importantly the location chosen will be one which will not get in the way of the church's day to day activities.

### EQUIPMENT CABINET

The RRUs will be connected the equipment cabinet using a single fibre tube.

The cabinet measures 1900mm wide x 1600mm tall x 550mm deep will be located, wherever possible where it can be accessed by the MNO's without supervision.

If there isn't space for a cabinet of this size, the equipment housed within it could simply be mounted to a Unistrut frame, or similar fitted to an internal wall.

At, or near the internal cabinet position NET CS will need to utilise a three-point power supply socket, if an existing socket is not available NET CS will include the installation of a new socket within the drawings.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The exact locations of the proposed antennas and equipment, and other matters such power etc. will be confirmed at the measured survey stage. NET CS's engineers can normally determine solution to suit both the PCC and the operator.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC EXAMPLE



Close up view of the castellation parapet taken from a Drone flown at parapet height



Close up view of the antenna wrapped in a vinyl image of the section of the castellation parapet where the antenna will be



## FINANCIAL TERMS

The CofE – NET CS OpenRAN proposal must compete with the Network Operators’ alternative site options.

BT Openreach have made their extensive portfolio of telegraph poles available to the Operators. A church solution will have to deploy 4 small panel antennas, 1 fixed to each face to provide the 360-degree coverage offered by telegraph poles.

Unlike a church option, BT Openreach will not require local authority planning approval, nor PCC, DAC, Church Architect and Faculty approval along with all the associated costs, and from an installation perspective BT Openreach will not be working within the confines of an historic, and a typically listed building. Therefore to make church options competitive and compelling, NET CS must assume economies of scale and deploy OpenRAN systems which can accommodate multiple operators to enable costs to be spread.

Note: Although there are 4 Operators, as far as rental income is concerned, the CofE and NET CS must assume Vodafone & Telefonica O2 will be deemed as being one operator, as will EE and 3

The other alternative options available to the Operators would be to deploy a “Streetworks” site, encompassing their own standalone pole located in the pavement or verge for which they will not pay any rent. Or a “Greenfield” tower located on private land, which under the Electronic Communications Code rights they will only offer a few hundred pounds p/a in compensation to the land owner (see pages 8 and 11 for more detail on the Code).

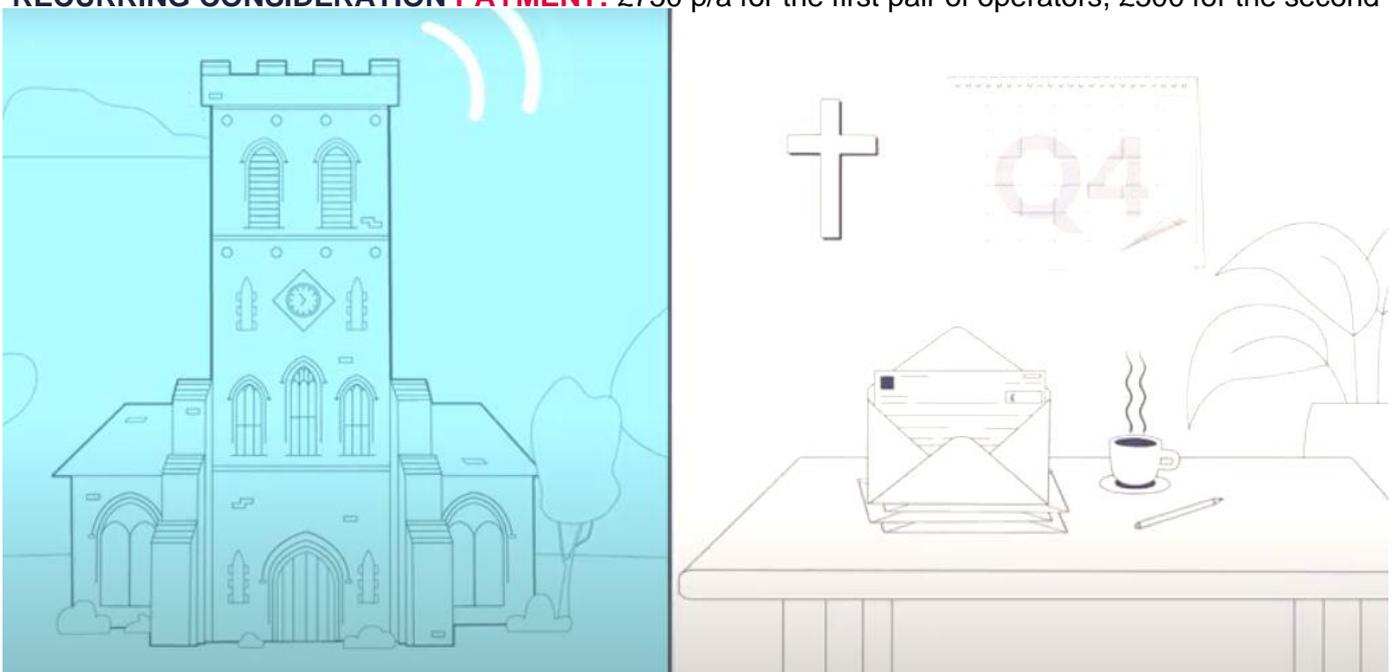
Based on the above factors the payments paid by NET CS to each church fall into two parts:

1. A one-off Compensation payment paid upon legal completion to I) compensate the church for the PCC’s time and efforts supporting NET CS progress the faculty application, including convening emergency PCC meetings if necessary, and II) to Compensate the church for any disruption and unconvinced caused during the installation works.
2. A recurring Consideration payment.

NET CS is delighted to confirm the payment terms for St Mary & St Bartholomew Church are as follows:

**ONE-OFF COMPENSATION PAYMENT:** £5,000 for the first pair of operators, £2,500 for the second

**RECURRING CONSIDERATION PAYMENT:** £750 p/a for the first pair of operators, £500 for the second



## THE BENEFITS TO THE CHURCH & WIDER COMMUNITY

The NET CS initiative will achieve the ambitions and objectives of the Joint Accord between the National Church Institutions of the Church of England and Her Majesty's Government promoting the use of church buildings and land to support the increasing need for internet and mobile signals throughout England and Wales.

Over 95% of households in the United Kingdom own a mobile phone and rely on mobile connectivity.

The mobile phone coverage and the high-speed wireless connectivity installed as part of the proposal will help each church to fulfil its wider local community mission, improving the sustainability of both the community and of its parish church.

In the event of an emergency, having a mobile phone can allow help to reach those in distress quickly and could possibly save lives. However, the importance of mobile phones goes far beyond personal safety.

Modern mobile phones are capable of internet access, enabling on-line banking and the payment of bills via a mobile device, and many mobile phones are equipped with GPS technology, allowing for use in most locations around the world and allowing the mobile phone to be found or the user located in the event of loss or emergency.

Good quality mobile phone communications are considered critical to local businesses.

Often one of the biggest difficulties to someone becoming independent in their community is the worry about being safe. What if I get lost? What if I get hurt? What if the bus does not come? What if I am late? What if the community centre is closed when I get there? What if I cannot find a pay phone to use? The "what if's" do not need to stop you from going out and enjoying activities in your community.

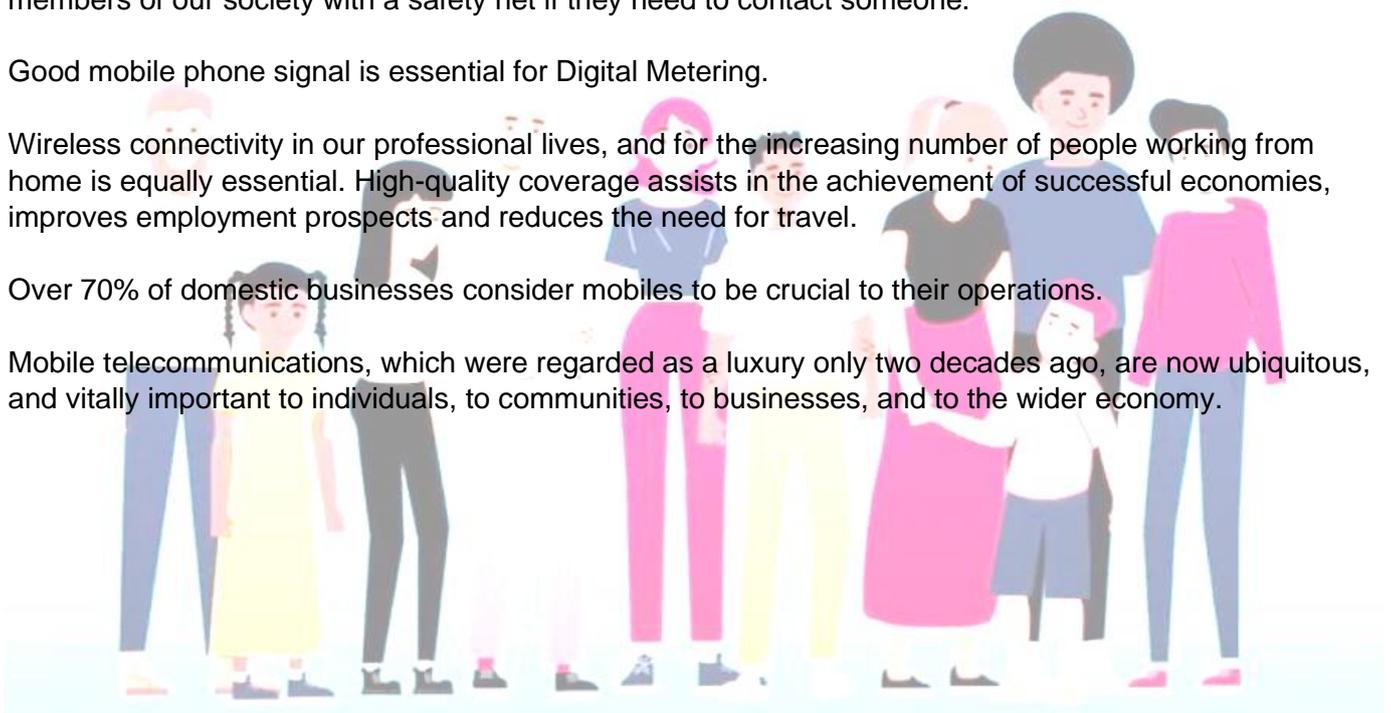
A cell phone or a smart phone is a tool that can facilitate independence while providing vulnerable members of our society with a safety net if they need to contact someone.

Good mobile phone signal is essential for Digital Metering.

Wireless connectivity in our professional lives, and for the increasing number of people working from home is equally essential. High-quality coverage assists in the achievement of successful economies, improves employment prospects and reduces the need for travel.

Over 70% of domestic businesses consider mobiles to be crucial to their operations.

Mobile telecommunications, which were regarded as a luxury only two decades ago, are now ubiquitous, and vitally important to individuals, to communities, to businesses, and to the wider economy.



## ABOUT NET CS

NET Coverage Solutions was established in 2004 to provide dedicated cellular telecoms services, encompassing site acquisition, design, and build services directly to the Mobile Network Operators. NET CS have been working with the CofE since 2004, initially through QS4, who had secured the National Aerials Agreement with the Archbishops' Council, and directly with the C of E since 2008 when, with the Archbishops' Council approval, NET CS acquired QS4.

Since 2008 NET have completed cellular installations within 36 Dioceses, which over the term of each agreement will provide over £32.5 million income to the CofE. NET CS is now an approved Acquisition, Design & Construction [ADC] supplier to all the Mobile Network Operators' [EE, O2, Vodafone & 3UK) and their associated deployment and estates management companies, Cornerstone & MBNL.

NET is ISO9001, ISO14001, OHSAS 18001, Safe Contractor, RISQS Accredited, & NET CS is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

NET CS Structural Engineers and dedicated C of E Build Managers have unrivalled experience designing and installing apparatus within historic church buildings to ensure both the visual impact and the impact on the fabric of a church building is minimal and never detrimental.

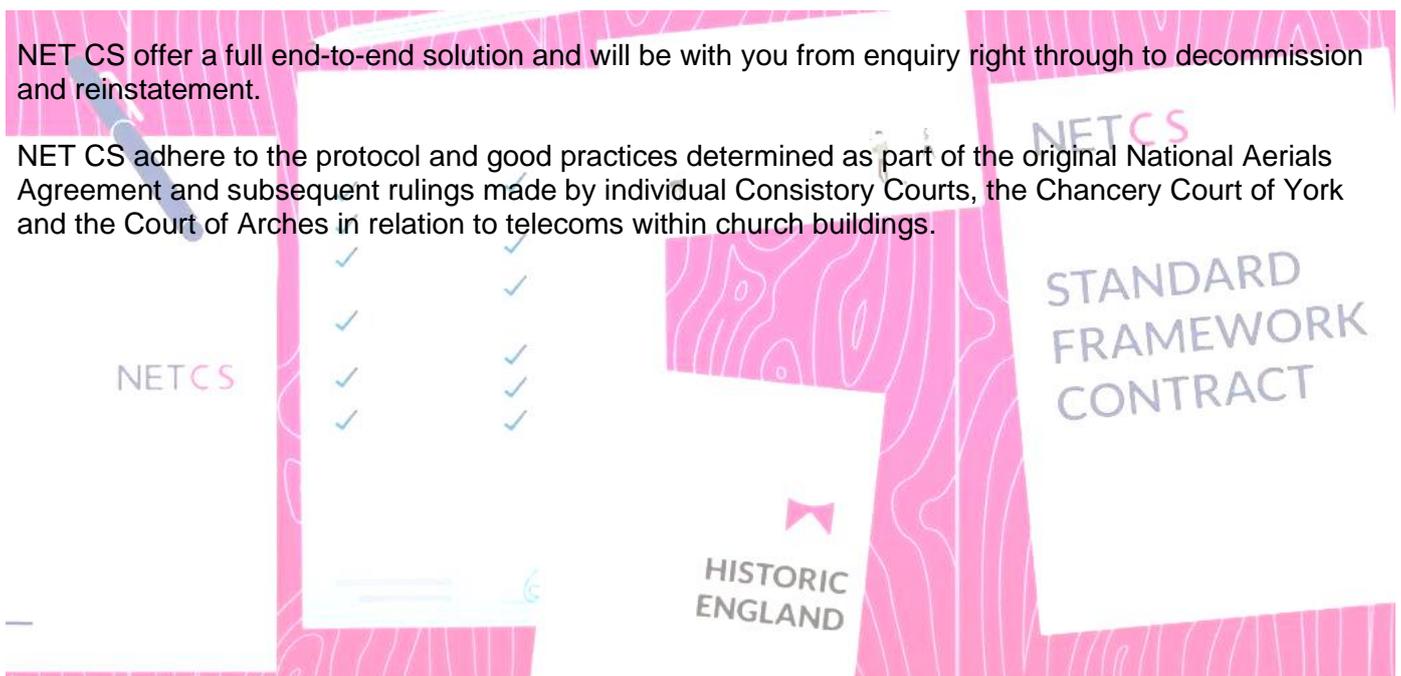
NET is the only company in the UK providing both indoor and outdoor coverage solutions with dedicated in-house teams.

## WHAT WE DO

NET CS has designed, built and currently maintain more church-based radio sites than any other consultant in the UK, but further to our technical expertise we have secured more DAC recommendations, Historic England and society approvals, planning notifications, PCC approvals and faculty certificates than any other consultant. Our in-depth knowledge of the faculty process combined with industry-leading design and installation services means NET CS are the number one consultant for church-based radio sites in the UK.

NET CS offer a full end-to-end solution and will be with you from enquiry right through to decommission and reinstatement.

NET CS adhere to the protocol and good practices determined as part of the original National Aerials Agreement and subsequent rulings made by individual Consistory Courts, the Chancery Court of York and the Court of Arches in relation to telecoms within church buildings.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### FIBRE TRANSMISSION LINK

In addition to power, a fibre transmission link will be installed so any calls etc. made within the local community and transmitted through the equipment installed at the church, can be routed ultimately to wherever the recipient may be in the world.

Therefore from the equipment cabinets NET CS will need to route a fibre tube measuring approximately 1.27cm in diameter, (within which the fibre will be ultimately blown/installed) either internally through the church tower, or externally if appropriate to do so, such if there is an existing lightning protection cable or similar cable, or where a downpipe is already installed, in which case NET CS may simply propose to follow the same route. If this tube is routed internally, at some point it will have to exit the tower which may necessitate core drilling to create an opening large enough to route the tube.

Once at ground level, NET CS will identify a duct route from the church tower to the church boundary which will be where the transmission provider will make their connection.

The fibre tube duct route will be determined to avoid consecrated ground (wherever possible) therefore the route is likely to follow an existing footpath and access way.

To ensure the reinstatement is of a high standard, all works within the church demise will be carried out by NET CS.

### NET CS'S LONG-TERM RESPONSIBILITIES

Maintenance inspections and any associated testing associated with the telecoms equipment.

Storage of any church artefacts removed/replaced as part of the radio equipment installation, such as louvres, if required.

Access facilitation and telephone help line service.

Management and administrative duties associated with the legal aspects of the licences to ensure the church's best interests are never compromised.

Management and coordination of the operators own maintenance activities.

### SUB-LICENCE AND CONSIDERATION SUM

Due to the unique nature of church sites NET adopt an operator independent role i.e. Head Licence between a Church and NET CS, and sub-Licences between NET CS and each Operator. Cornerstone (a combined O2 and Vodafone site) and any subsequent operator installations, will be implemented by means of a Sub-Licence between NET CS and the Operator/s.

Under the terms of the Sub-Licence Cornerstone (O2 / Vodafone) will pay NET Coverage Solutions Ltd (NET) the annual sum detailed on page 3 + a management fee to cover NET CS's annual management fee associated with NET CS's pre-legal completion and long-term services, along with the on-going responsibilities summarised below.

### OUR INSURANCE

NET CS maintain insurance cover as follows:-

- £30 million Public Liability
- £10 million Employers Liability
- £5 million Professional Indemnity

### COMPLETE COMMUNICATION

NET CS operates in a completely open and honest manner and will keep both the Church and Operator/s fully informed of progress and all associated matters in a timely manner throughout the whole process. Please note also that NET CS will not move to the next process milestone without first consulting with the church.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CODE 2017**

To achieve successive Governments' ambitions of a nationwide digital UK, on December 28, 2017 a new Electronic Communications Code took effect. Its aim is to make it easier for network operators to install and maintain radio sites for the mobile phone network throughout the UK. The change in the law meant that all proposed installation at churches went on hold due to the existing licence agreement becoming defunct, and we were unable to complete the faculty applications without a valid licence.

The new Code effectively provides network operators with a statutory right to install radio sites on land and buildings. In the case of church sites, authorisation through the Faculty process is required.

From a building owner's perspective, the impact of the new Code means that old rents are no longer applicable, and instead Compensation and Consideration values are being determined based on the value of the demise to be used for purposes other than telecoms. These fees are substantially lower than before.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Radio sites typically operate at many thousands of % below the recommended radio emissions levels, and because of the unrivalled number of independent tests carried out, H&S related misconceptions and concerns are very rare. As local communities and businesses rely on mobile communications, churches hosting radio equipment are seen as providing a vital service, which in turn eliminates any necessity for unsightly roof top installations or steel towers being erected elsewhere in the community. Despite this there are still concerns and NET CS representatives would be happy to speak directly to interested parties to explain the technology and mitigate their concerns.

Attached to this report is an EMF Health Fact Pack which explains how the technology works and why it is safe when operating within the safety guidelines.

## **LPA CONSULTATION AND PLANNING APPLICATION**

NET CS takes full responsibility to liaise with the local authority over the proposal, carry out all necessary pre-consultation with the local community and obtain planning permission as required.

## **LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

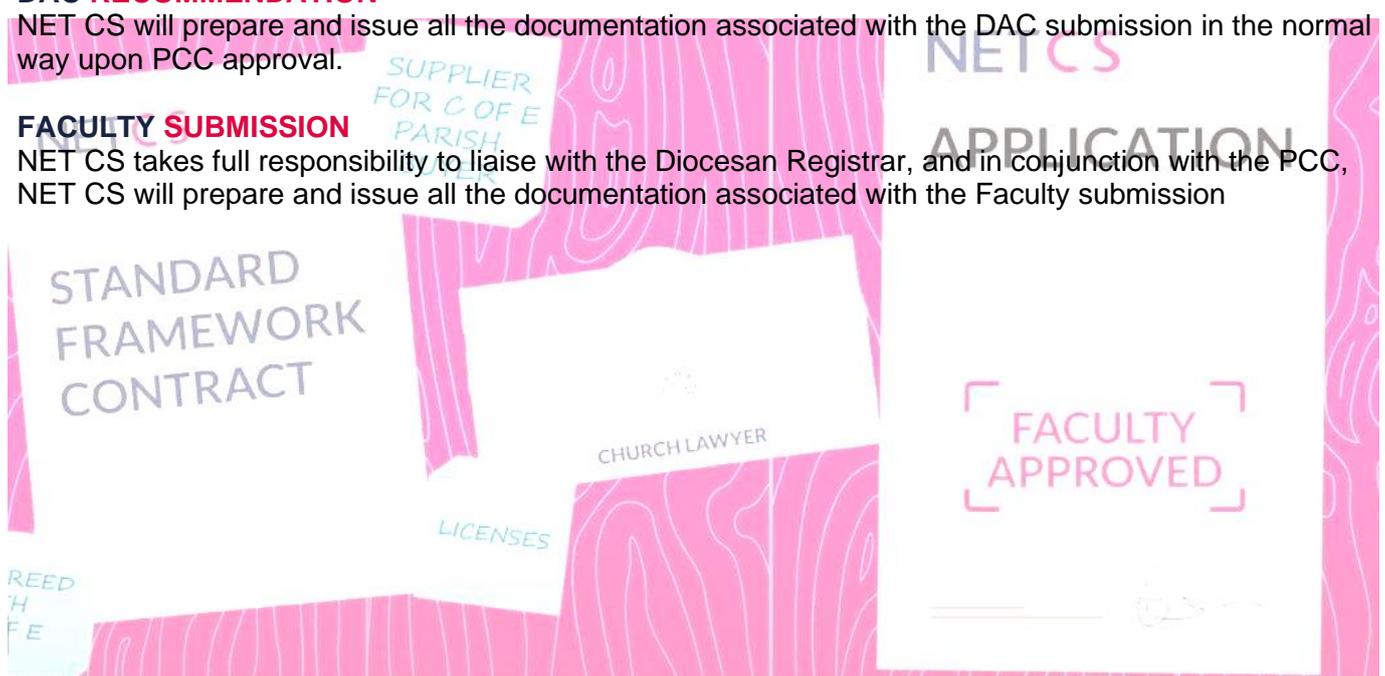
Listed building consent will be obtained as part of the Ecclesiastical Exemption i.e. through Faculty approval.

## **DAC RECOMMENDATION**

NET CS will prepare and issue all the documentation associated with the DAC submission in the normal way upon PCC approval.

## **FACULTY SUBMISSION**

NET CS takes full responsibility to liaise with the Diocesan Registrar, and in conjunction with the PCC, NET CS will prepare and issue all the documentation associated with the Faculty submission



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **BY CONFIRMING AN INTEREST, WOULD WE BE COMMITTING OURSELVES TO AN INSTALLATION?**

No, at this stage of the process we are only looking for a tentative yes or no. The network operator will be looking at several different potential antenna sites in your area and will only confirm their preferred option once the respective landlord of each site has confirmed their wish to be considered as a potential new antenna site.

### **WHAT IS THE COST TO US?**

There is no financial burden on the PCC whatsoever. Provided NET CS is notified, and fees are agreed in advance, NET CS will pay all reasonable costs associated with the proposal. This includes, but is not limited to, a solicitor to provide legal advice for the PCC, architect costs, planning fees etc.

### **HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE FROM START TO FINISH?**

Once the church has been 'nominated' by the network operator NET CS aim to secure Faculty approval within 6 months, although this will vary by diocese. Depending on the size and complexity of the design in question, the installation takes on average 1 to 2 weeks.

### **FOLLOWING THE INSTALLATION, WILL MAINTENANCE ENGINEERS REQUIRE 24-HOUR ACCESS TO THE EQUIPMENT?**

Under the terms of the Head Licence, up to 6 access visits p/a are permitted by 3rd party companies, within usual working hours (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday). Access visits over and above the permitted 6 per annum will be charged at £100 per visit per day, with the proceeds paid to the PCC quarterly. Access will be scheduled to avoid church activities and will be requested through NET CS with a minimum of 48 hours' notice, save for the case of emergencies. NET CS will liaise with the maintenance engineers and contact your nominated key-holder to arrange the access once we have approved the proposed work. NET will manage access to the equipment throughout the licence term.

### **WILL THIS AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO RING THE BELLS?**

No, NET CS have designed and installed over 200 church installations and each is tailored to suit the tower in question. NET will design a solution in agreement with the PCC and Tower Captain to suit the available space.

### **WILL THE INSTALLATION AFFECT THE SOUND OF THE BELLS?**

No, the additional equipment installed in the tower is not large enough to muffle the sound, nor will the lower-density GRP louvres (where applicable) louden the sound. DAC Bells Advisors have formulated this view having visited hundreds of such installations around the country and noted no audible change in volume.

### **WILL THIS DAMAGE THE FABRIC OF THE CHURCH?**

Any fixings to the church building will be stainless steel and into mortar joints wherever possible. The equipment cabinet placement and associated cable routes will be agreed with the church architect and PCC following a survey of the building, and of course must be approved by the DAC

### **WILL THE ANTENNAS NEED TO BE SWITCHED OFF EVERY TIME WE NEED TO ACCESS THE TOWER?**

No, there will be no restrictions to any areas of your church following the installation. The equipment is certified to conform to RF emissions guidelines, better known as the ICNIRP Limit, and nowhere inside the church will exceed the limit. An ICNIRP Certificate is provided as standard with every faculty and planning application NET CS make.

## **DO THESE INSTALLATIONS HAVE ANY IMPACT ON HEALTH?**

No, scientists have not established any link between the technology and ill health. Mobile telecoms equipment works using microwaves which do not carry anywhere near enough energy to trigger chemical reactions. It is only at high intensities and short distances (such as in an oven) that microwaves have any recordable biological effect, which is to heat the body tissue. NET CS's equipment operates a minimum of 50 times below the intensity required to heat animal tissue less than 0.1°C.

## **HOW DO WE KNOW THE TECHNOLOGY CAN'T CAUSE CANCER OVER TIME?**

Microwaves have been studied for over 80 years and have been proven to be too weak to damage the chemical bonds within molecules, regardless of intensity and proximity. It is only by damaging these chemical bonds that 'free radicals' and 'ions' are created within the body, which can subsequently damage DNA and cause cancer. Microwaves are an example of non-ionising radiation; ultraviolet light, X-rays and gamma rays are all examples of ionising radiation.

## **WE HAVE AN INDUCTION LOOP / SPEAKER SYSTEM INSTALLED, WILL THERE BE INTERFERENCE?**

There will not be any interference between the proposed telecoms installation and any pre-existing audio/visual equipment at the church. Ofcom assign a licence to each manufacturer of audio-visual equipment and mobile network operator to ensure that their respective equipment operates at a certain frequency which prevents any interference.

## **COULD THE EQUIPMENT EFFECT PACEMAKERS OR OTHER MEDICAL DEVICES?**

There is no scientific reason to suggest that any inert objects would be affected by antennas installed within the church tower. Implanted medical devices are governed by The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency which require the devices to be immune from interference, up to the general public reference levels from the EU recommendations on exposure limits.

Please also note, NET CS have designed and or installed mobile coverage solutions within hospitals including Great Ormond Street Hospital in London and the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow.

## **WILL THE ANTENNAS IMPACT OUR PLANNED TOWER RENOVATION WORKS?**

Provided NET is notified in advance then there is no reason why renovation works around the antennas cannot take place. The antennas can be relocated if necessary or, if relocation is not possible, switched off ('outage') for the duration of the work. However, please note operators will always wish to avoid outages wherever possible.

## **WHAT IS GRP?**

GRP stands for 'Glass-Reinforced Plastic'. This is often used to replace stone, slate or heavy timber louvres as the material allows the signal to pass through. GRP can be moulded and painted to replicate the look of any material.

## **WILL NET CS HANDLE EVERY ASPECT OF THE PROPOSAL?**

NET CS will take full responsibility for the whole end-to-end process, including the DAC and Faculty applications, and consultation as necessary with all relevant parties including the wider local community, the local authority, Historic England, The Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies (this comprises The Twentieth Century Society, The Georgian Group, The Ancient Monument Society, SPAB, the Victorian Society and the Council for British Archaeology) – the relevant body will pick the application up and should respond, National Parks, and Others based on the advice of the DAC.

NET CS adhere to the protocol and good practices determined as part of the original National Aerials Agreement and subsequent rulings made by individual Consistory Courts, the Chancery Court of York and the Court of Arches in relation to telecoms within church buildings.

## **WHY WILL DACS SUPPORT NET CS'S PROPOSALS?**

Each proposed design is bespoke and carefully considered to ensure the least impact on the fabric of each historic church building.

The long-term income derived by each church will help each PCC to maintain the UK's dearly loved heritage of historic church buildings, and Net's initiative will achieve the ambitions and objectives of the Joint Accord

## **IF THE MOBILE NETWORK OPERATOR'S EQUIPMENT IS NOT INSTALLED AT THE CHURCH, WHERE WOULD IT BE INSTALLED?**

This depends on the height and nature of the any adjacent buildings, and or, the topography of the surrounding land, and what the local authority will allow.

In an urban location the operators would probably prefer an adjacent rooftop installation because unlike a church site, the antennas will be visible and providing 360-degree unrestricted coverage.

Alternatively, to achieve the same coverage footprint, they may install up to three 'Streetworks' sites, these being standalone antenna support poles, typically the size and height of a lamppost, located in the footpath.

In a rural location, in terms of height, position within the community and concealment, the church normally offers the most ideal location.

If the church is utilised, the usual only alternative option of providing the same level would be either a series of Streetworks' sites located throughout the village, or to save money, the installation of a heavy-duty greenfield tower.

In every instance, rural or urban, all alternative options to a church will have a significantly greater visual and environmental impact.

## **WHAT RIGHTS DOES THE NEW ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS CODE 2017 GIVE THE MOBILE NETWORK OPERATORS?**

To achieve successive Governments' ambitions of a nationwide digital UK, on December 28, 2017 a new Electronic Communications Code took effect. Its aim is to make it easier for network operators to install and maintain radio sites for the mobile phone network throughout the UK. The change in the law meant that all proposed installation at churches went on hold due to the existing licence agreement becoming defunct, and we were unable to complete the faculty applications without a valid licence.

The new Code effectively provides network operators with a statutory right to install radio sites on land and buildings. In the case of church sites, authorisation through the Faculty process is required.

From a building owner's perspective, the impact of the new Code means that old rents are no longer applicable, and instead Compensation and Consideration values are being determined based on the value of the demise to be used for purposes other than telecoms. These fees are substantially lower than before.

## **WHY WILL LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SUPPORT THE COE-NET CS INITIATIVE?**

Each Local Authority will have the assurance that the full rigors and requirements of Faculty will be followed to the letter.

As part of this process, NET CS also consultant with i) Historic England, ii) Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies (this comprises The Twentieth Century Society, The Georgian Group, The Ancient Monument Society, SPAB, the Victorian Society and the Council for British Archaeology), and iii) National Parks

The NET CS proposal utilises an existing structure, and the visual impact will be minimal because the antennas are normally hidden behind the bell chamber louvres.

All alternative options of providing the same level of coverage (see earlier answer) would have a significantly greater visual and environmental impact.

## WHAT IS THE **JOINT ACCORD**?

The Joint Accord is an agreement between the National Church Institutions of the Church of England (“the NCIs”) and Her Majesty’s Government acting through the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity (“HMG”).

The NCIs and HMG recognise that a modern telecommunications infrastructure is vital for a vibrant economy and inclusive society. By working together with mobile and broadband providers, the CofE believe they can help deliver improved connectivity, and thereby bring about important practical benefits to congregations, local communities, local businesses and visitors alike.

The CofE recognise that it may be possible to use some Church of England churches and other Church-held buildings or land to host digital infrastructure.

The Joint Accord recognises that, consistent with the long-standing role played by church buildings as a focus of community cohesion and spirit, by encouraging the wider use of such assets, the CofE believe they can help improve connectivity and its consequential benefits to those areas where coverage does not currently exist, or where it is of poorer quality.

## WHO CARRIES OUT THE DESIGN AND **ASSOCIATED SERVICES**?

NET CS have a large highly experienced dedicated team working on C of E sites with unrivalled knowledge of the Faculty Jurisdiction process including consultations required with secular and amenity bodies and the requirements on PCC’s of the Charities Act, with all the prerequisite main and sub approvals, including pre-consultation and local authority planning approvals if required to ensure the ultimate milestone, namely Diocesan Chancellors approval (Faculty) is achieved in a timely manner. From a design and implementation perspective the NET CS Structural Engineers and dedicated C of E Build Managers have unrivalled experience designing and installing apparatus within historic church buildings to ensure both the visual impact and the impact on the fabric of a church building is minimal and never detrimental.

## WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR **LIAISING WITH HISTORIC ENGLAND AND OTHER SOCIETY APPROVALS**?

NET CS has worked and is fully conversant with Historic England requirements. NET CS will initiate communications with Historic England and other societies as necessary in the normal way once drawings have been approved by each party.

## WILL NET CS CONSULT WITH THE **CHURCH ARCHITECT**?

NET CS takes full responsibility to liaise with the Church appointed Architect and obtain their approval.

## WILL NET CS CONSULT WITH THE **LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**?

NET CS takes full responsibility to liaise with the local authority over the proposal and carry out all necessary pre-consultation with the local community and obtain planning permission as required.

## HOW LONG HAS NET CS BEEN WORKING **WITH THE COFE**?

NET CS has been working with the CofE for over 20-years.



**CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND HM GOVERNMENT  
JOINT ACCORD ON USE OF CHURCH LAND AND BUILDINGS TO SUPPORT DIGITAL  
CONNECTIVITY**

18 FEBRUARY 2018

This Accord is between the National Church Institutions of the Church of England (“the NCIs”) and Her Majesty’s Government acting through the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity (“HMG”).

**Background**

The NCIs and HMG recognise that a modern telecommunications infrastructure is vital for a vibrant economy and inclusive society. By working together with mobile and broadband providers, we believe that we can help deliver improved connectivity, particularly in rural areas, and thereby bring about important practical benefits to congregations, local communities, local businesses and visitors alike. We recognise that it may be possible to use some Church of England churches and other Church-held buildings or land to host digital infrastructure. This Accord recognises that, consistent with the long-standing role played by church buildings as a focus of community cohesion and spirit, by encouraging the wider use of such assets we can help improve connectivity and its consequential benefits to those areas where coverage does not currently exist, or where it is of poorer quality.

**Objective**

With that objective in view, this Accord is intended to set out our common understanding of the benefits which may result from improved digital connectivity, and the aspirations of the NCIs and HMG in relation to the use of Church land and buildings (“Church property”) to support digital connectivity, in particular through the hosting of infrastructure to provide broadband, mobile and Wi-Fi connectivity to areas where this is currently sub-optimal. This Accord recognises that the NCIs cannot and do not seek to speak on behalf of the autonomous legal entities and office holders at a parish, diocesan and national level. This Accord is not a legally binding document and does not create obligations which can be enforced against HMG or NCIs or any other Church entity. Each Church entity must take its own decision regarding the use of property for which it has responsibility. This Accord seeks to encourage Church entities to consider and promote the benefits which may result from hosting digital infrastructure and sets out the steps which HMG and the NCIs intend to take.

**Detail**

Improvements in digital connectivity have a wide range of benefits. Such benefits may include better access to online public services, improved social interaction with family and friends and the ability to take advantage of all the digital economy has to offer. An effective online presence can ensure that local businesses can extend their reach and better compete with other businesses, or in the case of tourism businesses, better attract visitors to the local area. Greater connectivity can support access to skills and training, resulting in improved productivity, and can lead to further local employment opportunities that boost the wider local economy.

The ability to communicate with others is a prerequisite for many aspects of the Church’s mission. It follows that these benefits will assist the mission of the Church, consistent with its desire, given effect through its Renewal and Reform programme, to become a growing church for all people and for all places. Improved communications can of themselves constitute valuable, practical care for those within a parish or community.

Other possible pastoral benefits may result from wider connectivity, including improvements in the Churches’ own contact with parishioners who find travel and transport difficult, older members of the community, and those who may be isolated, particularly in rural areas. Where online channels are more widely available, they can be used as part of outreach activities and to build community with and beyond the church congregation. In addition, improved connectivity can allow churches to host a wider variety of community services such as Post Offices, shops or GP surgeries. Finally, the terms of any agreement with telecoms providers to host infrastructure may have other benefits, including not only the income

generated by the agreement (noting the expected reductions in such payments that are anticipated as a result of the recent Electronic Communications Code reforms), but also the potential for other mutually beneficial terms, to be agreed, such as sharing the cost of maintaining a church tower or spire on which equipment may be mounted.

Individual parishes, and others with responsibility for Church buildings and land, will need to consider all the factors concerned with using Church land or buildings to host digital connectivity infrastructure. This Accord encourages them to do so within the context of their own priorities for mission, relevant planning controls, and their legal obligations both as an organisation and relating to the care of Church property, and appropriate guidance provided by the Church Buildings Council and Historic England. This recognises that the Church comprises a number of autonomous entities and office holders with different legal obligations and that the property may also be subject to third party agreements. Such entities may also have their own aspirations for the use and development of their properties in support of the Church's mission. Similarly, dioceses will, through their Diocesan Advisory Committees (DACs), need to balance the identified benefits of telecoms provision in the particular circumstances of the parish with other relevant factors.

### Actions

In the interests of promoting improved digital connectivity: The NCIs and HMG propose to take the following steps:

- HMG will take action to support improved connectivity across the UK, including in rural areas, and will continue to work with mobile and broadband operators to encourage investment that will deliver connectivity improvements. HMG will offer support, where appropriate, to help resolve barriers to delivering this ambition, and will help facilitate discussion between all parties.
- HMG will seek to provide advice and resource, as appropriate, to the NCIs to support the NCIs' efforts to enable individual dioceses, parishes and other landowners to consider supporting digital connectivity.
- HMG will do its best to provide coaching support for parishes and dioceses to help them develop the necessary skills needed to develop and progress digital infrastructure projects.
- HMG will encourage mobile and broadband operators to work proactively and pragmatically with owners of Church property to achieve the aims set out in this Accord, recognising that telecommunications infrastructure has siting and design requirements, and that the parties will need to put in place a suitable and commercially robust agreement.
- The NCIs will encourage where possible the development of guidance for dioceses, parishes and Chancellors which has in view a consistent approach to the use of Church property to enable digital connectivity.
- The NCIs will co-operate with mobile and broadband operators, to seek to establish a standard framework contract that could be put in place for church entities to use in contracting for connectivity in areas with no conventional wired broadband provision. Development of this framework contract will be at the operators' cost and in full knowledge that individual agreements will have to be negotiated with parishes or other landowners, and that these are not required to use such a framework contract.
- The NCIs will include digital connectivity within the remit of the Media Bishops Group. The Media Bishops Group will act as a conduit between the NCIs and dioceses in relation to any policy questions which arise.

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity

Mr William Nye LVO – Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council

The Rt Revd Dr David Walker, Bishop of Manchester – Deputy Chair of the Church Commissioners