

Connectivity

Infrastructure
Acceleration



5G Case Study

Connectivity

Synopsis

Staying connected has become a defining feature of the modern economy and a significant trend of the 21st century. 5G networks are critical to driving economic recovery and will prove fundamental to fulfilling the potential of digital connectivity, as we live in an 'always on' more connected world. Our growing reliance on connectivity has seen it take its place as the 4th utility alongside water, electricity and gas.

However, the opportunities 5G offers will not come automatically. One major barrier is the complex legal and planning framework to deploy or upgrade mobile sites where cutting through red tape and promoting collaboration is vital to the smooth 5G deployment across the UK.

One of West Midlands 5G's (WM5G) key objectives is to accelerate the roll-out of 5G and improve regionwide connectivity and we are already putting the West Midlands on the map as the most connected region in the UK recognised by leading mobile coverage analyst Umlaut.¹

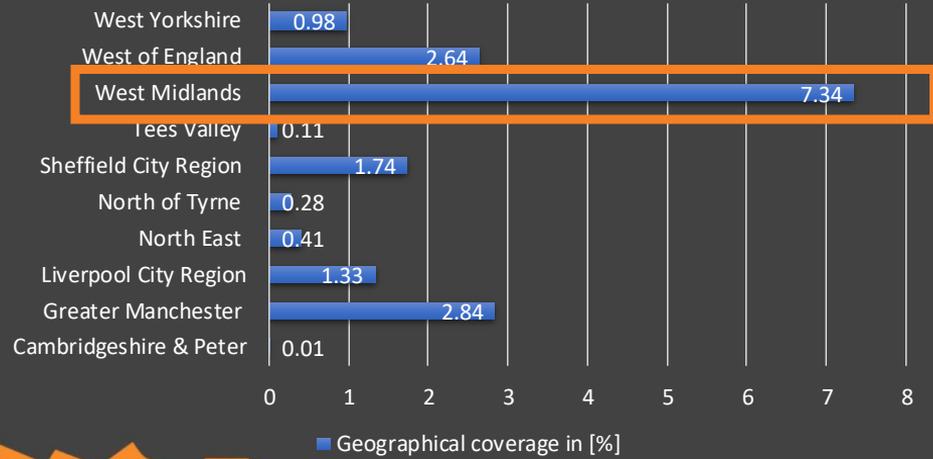
To ensure the network matures in a way that is beneficial to both the West Midlands' citizens and businesses, WM5G works collaboratively with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and the region's councils to streamline the processes. Our targets are to reduce deployment timeframes by at least six months, and to deliver 20% more 5G sites to the region by March 2022.

By [breaking down barriers](#), facilitating collaboration, developing tools such as a [Connected Map](#), and resolving issues arising from the [Electronic Communications Code](#) and the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), we will enable the roll-out of 5G technology at scale.

Getting the infrastructure right now will mean businesses and public sector organisations can get involved much sooner, which will help to position the West Midlands and indeed the UK as a world leader in 5G technology.



5G Coverage – Combined Authorities



West Midlands ranks 1st in 5G geographical coverage.

Problem



To successfully establish 5G in the UK, existing mobile phone masts need to be upgraded and new masts added to the network.

Network operators have to work with councils and private organisations to identify suitable sites prior to installation.

This work is often hampered by a complex legal framework as well as having to navigate local planning guidance and other council priorities – resulting in a delay to the deployment of 5G.

Thanks to some pioneering work, WM5G has been able to make the processes for installing 5G infrastructure smoother and more straightforward, reducing time scales and ultimately improving geographical coverage.

Solution



Key to our success has been to act as a facilitator, engendering a philosophy of collaboration.

To this mix, we bring together expertise across many areas, including: industry networks, local authority know-how and planning proficiency.

We work closely with Digital Champions, Coordinators and key stakeholders, continuously reviewing and refining our approach.

This includes adopting standard code agreements and implementing methodological processes.

WM5G's success has led to widening our support - sharing best practice with Government and councils across the country and advising operators and their suppliers as to how to improve or change their approach to be more successful.

Benefit



We focus on making processes as easy and straightforward as possible, reducing timescales and importantly the costs to deploying 5G - in turn encouraging the MNOs to do more in the region.

By simplifying the necessary processes, 5G deployment has been massively accelerated, by more than six months.

The West Midlands has been recognised as the number one region in the UK for geographical 5G coverage.

Our experience shows joining all the players in the ecosystem together - MNOs, councils, the public and private sectors - will ultimately unlock the ability to deliver benefits to citizens, communities and companies.

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We have worked tirelessly to help councils and MNOs find an appropriate balance between the economic and social benefits of 5G infrastructure and its visual impact. Growing the region's 5G infrastructure will allow the West Midlands to remain at the forefront of digital innovation and reap the rewards of 5G technology.

The roll-out of 5G will attract investment and innovation as part of a technological renaissance and we're delighted to see our hard work result in being ranked highest of all the combined authorities by Umlaut.

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Rhys Enfield, Director of Infrastructure Acceleration,
West Midlands 5G

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We are proud to have funded the pioneering multi-city West Midlands testbed to speed up 5G roll-out and unlock new ways it can boost businesses and improve people's lives.

The region's position at the top of the table for 5G coverage proves just how beneficial this Government investment has been and we'll be making sure the rest of the UK benefits from the lessons learned.

”

Matt Warman MP, Minister for Digital Infrastructure

Takeaways

Sustain



It is essential for the successful deployment of 5G that any potential barriers are identified and solutions found. This will make it easier and more affordable for councils, enterprise and network providers to improve the region's connectivity.

Learnings



Barrier busting work and the development of tools such as the Connected Map have helped the West Midlands take a competitive edge and lead the way in the UK for geographical coverage of 5G.

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