



The Vodafone/Three UK Panel
Competition & Markets Authority
25 Cabot Square
London
E14 4QZ

3rd October 2024

Dear the Vodafone / Three UK Panel,

With technology playing an increasingly important role in all aspects of our lives, reliable and extensive connectivity is essential and as innovation is accelerated by new and improved technologies – including standalone 5G and IoT, the demands on connectivity are only going to increase.

As a digitally progressive local authority, Warwickshire is committed to working closely with providers to improve digital connectivity across the county. We recognise the huge opportunities that technologies such as 5G can bring to sectors such as industry, agriculture, education, health and social care – as well as to the provision of better and more cost-efficient council-run services.

We also want to ensure that, as digital connectivity is becoming increasingly vital to everything that we do in society and with more and more services moving online, that all our residents are digitally enabled and that no communities or individuals are left behind.

Warwickshire residents and businesses would benefit in a number of ways if the CMA were to allow this merger between Vodafone and Three UK to go ahead. For example:

- Users of the combined network would see immediate improvements in coverage and reliability, particularly in the more rural, less densely populated areas of the county, where reach is more limited and coverage may not currently be provided by one of the two networks.
- Combining the assets of the two companies would unlock around £11bn worth of potential investment in the UK's digital infrastructure, leading to the creation of one of Europe's leading 5G networks. This in turn will help drive economic growth, generate innovation and job creation across Warwickshire and beyond.
- It would bring more choice with a wider range of plans and service packages for customers to choose from and the resulting economies of scale could lead to better deals and lower prices for both consumers and businesses across the county.

We also welcome the commitment made by Vodafone and Three UK that under the proposed new entity 99% of the UK's population will be covered by a 5G standalone network by 2034. If the merger is allowed to go ahead, this would mean that everyone in Warwickshire – including those who live in our more rural areas, will be able benefit from the life-changing improvements that such connectivity would enable.

We understand the concerns that some people have that reducing the number of primary network operators in the UK from four to three could potentially have a negative and unfair impact upon competition in the market. Warwickshire would obviously accept any decision that the CMA makes with regards to this. However, we firmly believe that the proposed merger could be hugely beneficial to Warwickshire and therefore urge the CMA to approve it for the reasons outlined above.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Martin Watson, Digital Ambassador – Warwickshire County Council