

Analogue Commercial Radio Licence: Format Change Request Form

Date of request:	24 May 2019
Station Name:	Smooth Radio
Licensed area and licence number:	Northampton AL011
Licensee:	Global Radio (AM) Ltd
Contact name:	Will Harding

Details of requested change(s) to Format

Character of Service <i>Complete this section if you are requesting a change to this part of your Format</i>	Existing Character of Service: AN EASY LISTENING STATION FEATURING LIFESTYLE ORIENTED SPEECH, TARGETING A NORTHAMPTON AUDIENCE AGED 50-PLUS.
	Proposed new Character of Service: A CLASSIC POP HITS STATION TARGETED PRIMARILY AT 35-54 YEAR-OLDS IN THE NORTHAMPTON AREA.
Programme sharing and/or co-location arrangements <i>Complete this section if you are requesting a change to this part of your Format</i>	Current arrangements: <u>Programme sharing:</u> All programmes may be shared with other AM stations in the Smooth network in England.
	Proposed new arrangements: <u>Programme sharing:</u> All programmes may be shared with other AM stations in the Gold network in England
Locally-made hours and/or local news bulletins	Current obligations:

<p>Complete this section if you are requesting a change to this part of your Format</p>	<p>Proposed new obligations:</p>
--	---

The holder of an analogue local commercial radio licence may apply to Ofcom to have the station's Format amended. Any application should be made using the layout shown on this form, and should be in accordance with Ofcom's published [procedures for Format changes](#).

Under section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as amended), Ofcom may consent to a change of a Format only if it is satisfied that *at least* one of the following five statutory criteria is satisfied:

- (a) *that the departure would not substantially alter the character of the service;*
- (b) *that the departure would not narrow the range of programmes available by way of relevant independent radio services to persons living the area or locality for which the service is licensed to be provided;*
- (c) *that the departure would be conducive to the maintenance or promotion of fair and effective competition*
- (d) *that there is evidence that, amongst persons living in that area or locality, there is a significant demand for, or significant support for, the change that would result from the departure; or*
- (e) *that (i) the departure would result from programmes included in the licensed service ceasing to be made at premises in the area or locality for which the service is provided, but (ii) those programmes would continue to be made wholly or partly at premises within the approved area (as defined in section 314 of the Communications Act 2003 (local content and character of services)).*

Only one of these five criteria need be satisfied in order for Ofcom to consent to the proposed change. However, even if Ofcom is of the opinion that the proposed change satisfies one or more of the statutory criteria, there may be reasons (depending on the particular circumstances of the case) why Ofcom may not consent to the proposed change. The additional criteria to which Ofcom will have regard when exercising this discretion can be found [on our website](#).

Applicants should note that, under section 106ZA of the same Act (as amended), a proposed change that *does not* satisfy the first or last of these criteria (i.e. a change that Ofcom considers *would* or *could* substantially alter the character of the service, or does not relate to the origin of locally-made programmes) must, if it is to be considered further under any of the other three criteria, be consulted upon.

In the event that Ofcom receives a request for Format change and considers that criterion (a) or (e) is *not* satisfied, it will seek confirmation from the applicant as to whether it wishes to proceed with the request (and, if so, whether it wishes to amend or replace its submission in light of the necessity to make it public).#

Please set out the statutory criterion, or criteria, set out in section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 that you believe is/are satisfied in relation to this Format change request, and the reasons for this.

Criteria (a): That the departure would not substantially alter the character of the service.

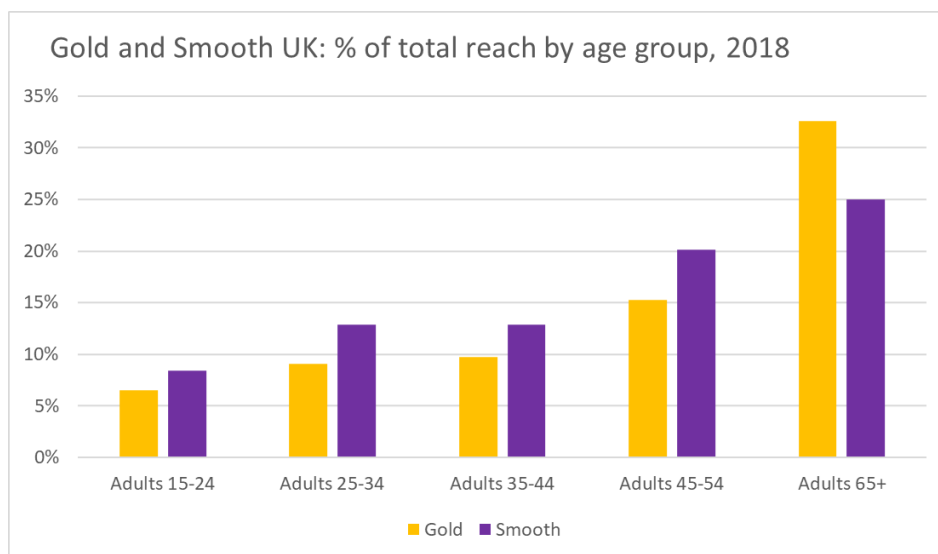
Please provide any additional information and/or evidence in support of the proposed change(s) below. In particular, the applicant may wish to outline how they see that the proposed change fits within Ofcom's published [Format change request policy](#) and also Ofcom's [Localness guidance](#), which includes our [co-location and programme sharing policy](#).

This licence was operated as Gold Northampton for many years prior to being rebranded and relaunched as Smooth Radio in 2014.

Ofcom approved the change from Gold to Smooth in March 2014 on the basis that the change would not substantially alter the character of service of the station, noting that the core requirements of the service to appeal to an older audience with a music mix featuring classic pop hits would not be changing, and that the broad nature of the existing Format description afforded the licensee considerable flexibility to decide upon the eras and genres of music on which to focus its output.

Global is now requesting to revert back to the Gold format following a request from Communicorp UK Ltd to extend their existing brand licence for Smooth East Midlands to the Kettering area.

While the target demographic will change from 50+ to 35-54, Gold and Smooth appeal to a very similar age demographic, as shown below. Indeed, across the UK as a whole listeners over 50 account for a higher % of Gold's total reach than is the case for Smooth.



Source: RAJAR W4 2018

The station will also continue to play a broad range of music. 35% of the songs played on Smooth are also played on Gold. Both networks include music in their playlists from a broad range of genres and decades, as detailed below.

Genre	Gold	Smooth
Pop	60%	35%
Rock	20%	0%
Soul	12%	28%
Ballad	4%	25%
Other	4%	12%

Era	Gold	Smooth
50s	4%	0%
60s	38%	5%
70s	44%	16%
80s	14%	45%
90s	0%	20%
00s	0%	14%

For these reasons, the change back to Gold will not substantially alter the character of the service.

Notes

Ofcom may approve a change under any of criteria (b) to (d) without consultation, or after a consultation of less than 28 days, if Ofcom considers that to hold a consultation at all, or for 28 days or more, would result in a delay that would be likely to prejudice the interests of the licensee. Ofcom may also remove for the purposes of consultation any confidential information submitted by the licensee.

Data Protection

We require the information requested in this form in order to carry out our licensing duties under the Broadcasting Act 1990, Broadcasting Act 1996 and Communications Act 2003. Please see Ofcom’s General Privacy Statement www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/foi-dp/general-privacy-statement for further information about how Ofcom handles your personal information and your corresponding rights

Ofcom notes on the request

Statutory requirements

This request relates to the AM licence for Northampton held by Global Radio (AM) Ltd., currently broadcasting as ‘Smooth Radio’.

Global Radio (AM) Ltd. has requested the following changes to the Format of this licence:

- To change the Character of Service from ‘An easy listening station featuring lifestyle oriented speech, targeting a Peterborough audience aged 50-plus’ to ‘A classic pop hits station targeted primarily at 35-54 year-olds in the Peterborough area’.
- To share all programming with all other AM stations in the Gold network in England, rather than the Smooth network.

These proposed changes would change the character of service as set out in the Format of the licence, and accordingly can be agreed only if Ofcom is satisfied in regard to one of the statutory criteria set out in section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as set out in the request, above).

If we are satisfied in relation to one of the statutory criteria, we are then able to decide whether or not to approve the request, taking account of our published policy criteria.

Assessment

With regard to the request to change the description of the Character of Service, Ofcom was satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(a) of the Broadcasting Act 1990, on the basis that the change requested, if approved, would not substantially alter the character of service.

The core requirement of the required service (to appeal to an older audience) would not be changing, and the relatively broad nature of the existing Format description already affords the Licensee flexibility to decide upon the eras of music it broadcasts.

We were also satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(a) with regard to the change to the programme sharing arrangements. This change will not alter the approved area (of England) in which local programming must be produced, and it therefore remains consistent with our [localness guidelines](#).

As a matter of [general policy](#), we are content to approve Format change requests relating to locally-made programming and programme sharing which are consistent with our published localness guidelines on these matters.

Decision

Ofcom decided to approve this Format change request from Global Radio (AM) Ltd. because we were satisfied in relation to one of the relevant statutory criteria, and for the policy reason outlined above.

[July 2019]