



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

27 August 2020

Dear Colleague,

The Government is committed to supporting the deployment of gigabit broadband across the country, ensuring that every home and business in the UK can access gigabit broadband services as soon as possible. Next-generation fixed-line and mobile infrastructure brings fast and reliable connectivity, and will drive faster local economic growth and greater social inclusion. Digital connectivity is playing a central role in our levelling-up agenda, and is critical to helping the economy recover following the COVID-19 pandemic.

To achieve its gigabit commitments, the Government is investing £5 billion through the 'Outside-In' programme to deliver gigabit speeds to the hardest-to-reach communities in the UK. We have also agreed a £1 billion 'Shared Rural Network' deal with the mobile industry to extend 4G mobile coverage to the most rural parts of our country. In addition to financial investment, the Government is working to remove the barriers that slow down or prevent deployment of infrastructure, through a range of measures including legislative reform<sup>1</sup>, regulatory reform<sup>2</sup>, and the provision of new digital services, such as Street Manager.

### **The role of Local Authorities**

Local authorities play a critical role in delivering gigabit broadband. Councils are in an excellent position to support investment and roll out by ensuring that effective policies and procedures are in place to promote engagement with industry.

The deployment of these networks is complex and requires strong collaboration not only between telecommunications operators, councils and third parties (such as contractors), but also internally within the council. It is crucial that in order for councils to most effectively meet this challenge, **all relevant teams - highways, planning, legal, estates and housing - work towards an agreed goal: bringing digital connectivity**, and with it faster economic growth and greater social inclusion, to local businesses and residents.

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<sup>1</sup> The **Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill**, and mandating gigabit-capable connectivity to **new build developments** via the **building regulations**.

<sup>2</sup> Consulting on changes to the **permitted development regulations** in England to support deployment of mobile infrastructure

Cambridgeshire and Kent are excellent examples of local authorities in which both elected members and officials work together to facilitate and encourage the deployment of next-generation gigabit networks in rural and urban areas. Similarly, the WM5G project across the West Midlands continues to address the challenges that face councils when deploying 5G technology.

The three issues where you can make a significant difference to the availability for gigabit broadband in your areas are:

### **Highways**

Street works account for 70% of the cost of digital infrastructure deployment. It is therefore critical for all stakeholders to work together effectively to deliver gigabit broadband networks. Your Highways team is in a strong position to facilitate deployment - for example by embracing the new [Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways](#), following the [Street Works toolkit](#), and not placing undue limits on works in an area.

The Government continues to work closely with the Joint Authorities Group (JAG) UK and the Highway Authorities & Utilities Committee (HAUC) UK to promote greater collaboration and performance, and highways authorities that have led the way in this regard include Gloucestershire and Brent.

### **Access Agreements**

Telecom operators need to secure rights to install their infrastructure on public sector land, buildings and assets. Your council can help facilitate the deployment of gigabit broadband by working collaboratively with operators to reach access agreements that encourage and facilitate industry investment.

There are a number of councils whose property teams have embraced the roll out of gigabit networks. These authorities have granted access to council housing, roof-tops and street furniture, on terms which reflect the legislative framework. These agreements are based on a Government-supported non-exclusive, open access model.

Included as attachments to this letter are guidance notes for local authorities on access agreements and valuation. We hope that these will help your council work effectively with industry to facilitate rollout of this critical infrastructure, and we would be grateful if you could ensure that your officials have regard to its contents.

### **Managing 5G health concerns**

We know that some constituents have expressed concerns about the potential harmful effects on human health of 5G. Some have even linked 5G to the coronavirus,

encouraged by online conspiracy theories. All of these concerns are completely unfounded and Public Health England has stated that there is no credible evidence.

The Government has developed guidance to help councils and local politicians deal with queries from the public, counter misinformation and explain the facts about 5G. This will help support your role in facilitating the rollout of next-generation infrastructure, and prevent misleading claims becoming a barrier to rollout.

### What can you do?

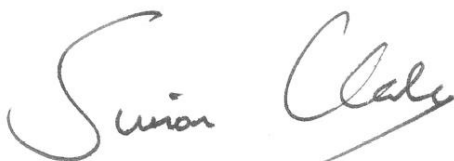
As a senior leader within your council, there a number of ways in which you can promote investment in and roll out of next-generation networks in your local area:

- Work with your highways and housing/estates teams to ensure they are working to enable and facilitate digital infrastructure deployment.
- Identify a senior executive within your council to act as a 'Digital Champion' within the authority to work across multiple teams to ensure a cohesive digital infrastructure strategy.
- Ensure that your estates, commercial and legal teams are familiar with the guidance on valuation and access to land attached at **Annex A** and **Annex B**.
- Address 5G health concerns by following public health guidance at **Annex C**.
- Work with the Government's Barrier Busting Task Force to identify and remove local barriers to deployment. Please email [localconnectivity@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:localconnectivity@dcms.gov.uk) for assistance and guidance.

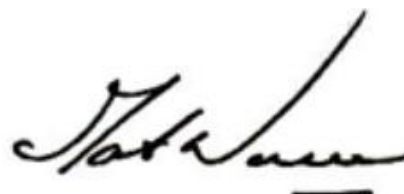
The [Digital Connectivity Portal](#) provides further guidance for local authorities and operators on improving connectivity in local areas. This will be updated shortly by the Government, and we welcome your input to ensure that it remains a helpful tool for local authorities across the UK.

In order to better understand the work that local authorities are doing to progress digital programmes, we would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by email with your plans for speeding up digital infrastructure rollout to Richard Maddock ([richard.maddock@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:richard.maddock@dcms.gov.uk)) by Friday 25 September.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Clarke MP  
**Minister of State  
for Regional Growth and  
Local Government**



Matt Warman MP  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
for Digital Infrastructure**