

CHAPTER 13: TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Introduction and Context

- 13.1 The previous version of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan addressed the previous omission of information on the impact of growth within the Borough on the need for new telecommunications infrastructure. No update has been provided by telecommunications providers or the County Council on such matters. The additional information provided in this chapter reflects that information available via the websites of service providers and that published by Connected Counties.
- 13.2 The provision of telecommunications infrastructure is considered to be a central Government priority as the advancement in connectivity continues to revolutionise people's quality of life and the efficiency and growth potential of businesses. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) plans to achieve a transformation in broadband provision in the UK by 2017 through the '*Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)*' project. This entails delivery of superfast broadband and better mobile connectivity to the nation through an investment of over £1 billion to improve the infrastructure.
- 13.3 The BDUK consists of three programmes¹ including:
- Superfast Broadband Programme:

This programme's ambition is to provide superfast broadband (i.e. speeds of 24 Megabytes per second (Mbps) or more) for at least 95% of UK premises and universal access to basic broadband (speeds of at least 2Mbps). Delivery will be achieved in three phases which seek to incrementally increase access to broadband.
 - SuperConnected Cities Programme:

¹ Information sourced from: <https://www.gov.uk/broadband-delivery-uk> (February 2015).

The Government are investing £150 million to support UK cities to develop the digital infrastructure capability to remain internationally competitive and attractive for investors, businesses and visitors. This programme includes three components: Broadband Connection Vouchers Scheme; Wi-Fi projects; and Innovative digital projects.

- Mobile Infrastructure Project:

The Government is investing £150 million in mobile infrastructure to improve coverage for voice calls and text messages for the remaining 0.3-0.4% of UK premises that don't currently have it.

13.4 BT have invested over £3bn in rolling out fibre optic broadband to the two-thirds of UK premises where they could make a commercial case for investment and in rural areas where works have been rolled out in conjunction with government body Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)

13.5 Locally, Hertfordshire County Council and the adjoining Buckinghamshire County Council are part of a 'Connected Counties' programme in conjunction with BT which aims to facilitate achievement of the above-mentioned Government aims. Specifically, the programme seeks to provide superfast fibre broadband connectivity, with speeds of up to 80Mbps, to over 90% of homes and businesses within those authorities by April 2016. This equates to a total of 734,500 premises (682,000 from BT deployments and the remaining 52,500 as a result of the Connected Counties programme)². Additionally, the programme seeks to ensure that *everyone* in the two counties has access to a minimum of 2Mbps broadband speeds. Additional funding has been secured by Connected Counties through a Superfast Extension Programme (SEP) to facilitate the upgrading of new areas to fibre broadband to enable superfast broadband speeds.

² Information sourced from: <http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-community/broadband/> (February 2015).

- 13.6 A total of £18.06 million is being invested in the Connected Counties Programme³. This is being funded jointly by Buckinghamshire County Council (£3.7 million) and Hertfordshire County Council (£1.61 million), the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) for both counties (Hertfordshire LEP and Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP), BT (£8.6 million) and the Government's BDUK Team (£4.15 million). A further £13.9 million has been secured to extend and accelerate the programme (SEP).
- 13.7 Therefore it is evident that the importance of delivering telecommunication infrastructure within Dacorum aligns with both county and national level policy objectives. As such, the InDP Update should seek to identify existing infrastructure capacity, where new or additional infrastructure is required to facilitate this provision, the cost of providing this infrastructure and how this should be funded.

Policy Drivers

- 13.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the provision of high quality communications infrastructure and recognises its necessity and contribution to sustainable economic growth, particularly the provision of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks.
- 13.9 In terms of planning for such infrastructure, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area within the Local Plan including (amongst others) the provision and delivery of infrastructure for telecommunications⁴.
- 13.10 In assembling a proportionate evidence base to demonstrate what infrastructure is necessary to deliver planned growth and the development objectives set out within the Council's Core Strategy and Pre-submission Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), the NPPF also emphasises the need to work in collaboration with other authorities and

³ Information sourced from: <http://www.connectedcounties.org/home>.

⁴ Paragraph 156 of the NPPF.

providers. This includes a requirement to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure for telecommunications taking account of the need for strategic infrastructure including that which might be nationally significant infrastructure within the Borough⁵.

- 13.11 Referring to sustainable economic growth, this aim was reiterated and strengthened within a letter to all local authorities in England from the DCLG and DCMS. The letter highlighted the vital role local planning authorities have in supporting the rollout of superfast broadband when updating Local Plans and determining planning applications, and the need to work collaboratively with providers to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure of strategic priority.⁶
- 13.12 The legislative framework to require developers to provide broadband network connections is still weak although it remains an objective of the government to address such matters in 2016. In the meantime local authorities are encouraged to work with Connected Counties to include new developments within the Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire area and ensure that policies in emerging local plans enable high quality fibre broadband to be provided.

Existing Infrastructure Plans

- 13.13 Neither the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Investment Strategy (HIIS) (2009), Dacorum Strategic Infrastructure Study (DSIS) (2011) nor the 2014 Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update (IDP) has previously addressed the requirement to plan for telecommunication infrastructure delivery.
- 13.14 The Council has not previously been made aware of any infrastructure plans by the providers themselves despite there being a requirement on mobile telecommunications operators to provide local planning authorities with their annual reports identifying proposed development and areas where

⁵ Paragraph 162 of the NPPF.

⁶ Letter from Brandon Lewis MP (Minister of State for Housing and Planning) and Ed Vaizey MP (Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy) jointly from the DCLG and DCMS dated 19th March 2015.

development pressures may arise in order to deliver required levels of coverage.

Infrastructure Provider

- 13.15 For fixed-line or mobile telecom services, BT Openreach (one of British Telecom Group's four lines of business) has a universal commitment and obligation under a licence to provide a phone line and network capacity upon request only. All the infrastructure work required to achieve that connection is at BT's expense. Where diversion work is necessary (i.e. an existing network needs to be moved) then this is chargeable and the developer must register a site three months prior to the commencement of the development in order to secure this work.
- 13.16 At present, the provision of telecommunication infrastructure is somewhat reactive insofar as the developer will approach BT Openreach after the grant of planning permission and at the point of construction to request the provision of infrastructure services. In response to this, BT Openreach usually reimburses the developer the costs associated with the installation of any requisite ducts or cabling as required by BT Openreach.
- 13.17 The main infrastructure requirements for mobile phone provision is sites for masts, however, this is dealt with through the development management process. Specifically, this is delivered by statutory undertakers through the rights inferred by Part 16 the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as set out in Schedule 2.
- 13.18 The mobile telecommunication operators active within Dacorum include:
- Three;
 - EE; and
 - Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Ltd (CTIL) – joint venture owned by Telefónica UK Limited and Vodafone Limited operating Vodafone and O2 networks.

Existing and Committed Infrastructure Provision

- 13.19 Although several attempts have been made to contact BT Openreach, as the principle infrastructure provider in the telecommunications market, the Council have been unsuccessful in getting a response. The purpose of engaging this provider was to establish the state of existing telecommunications infrastructure within Dacorum, what infrastructure improvements were planned for the coming year and to take account of the Borough's projected growth levels. This communication process was intended to be beneficial two-ways so that information relating to the Council's projected growth levels could assist BT Openreach in planning the provision of their services, including any new infrastructure, network upgrades and other improvements.
- 13.20 According to BT more than 25 million premises can get access to fibre based products and services. This equates to around 85% of the country. BT has targeted reaching more than nine out of ten people in the UK with fibre based services by 2020.
- 13.21 A series of maps are published on the Connected Counties website indicating the broad extent of broadband coverage within Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire and future rollout plans. This is available at <http://www.connectedcounties.org/check-availability>
- 13.22 The majority of the Dacorum area is well connected and the Council will continue to provide data in relation to new development proposals to ensure that these are appropriately considered by infrastructure providers.
- 13.23 The Connected Counties programme delivered the first rollout of Broadband across the county and Buckinghamshire in March 2016. Connected Counties is continuing to make progress with a second rollout, the Superfast Extension Programme (or SEP) being pursued. The coverage area for the Herts rollout is confirmed. The timescales for delivery will see the first SEP

cabinets go live in early 2017. By December 2017 we will have increased fibre broadband coverage to 95 per cent in Herts, with this rising to 98 per cent by 2019.

- 13.24 A total of £13.9 million funding has been confirmed for SEP in Herts, with contributions from Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire LEP, central government and BT.
- 13.25 For mobile telecommunications, the Annual Network Update Plans identify the extent of existing infrastructure within the Borough but do not identify any specific forthcoming or planned projects for this year.

Estimating Future Demand

- 13.26 BT Openreach own an extensive network of cables, cabinets and telephone exchange buildings across the UK and allow other telecommunications companies and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to utilise this physical infrastructure so that customers have the ability to choose a provider on the open market competitively. This is referred to as '*open access infrastructure*'.
- 13.27 BT Openreach are, at present, only obliged to provide a copper phone line to new premises (homes and other premises) as opposed to the more advanced fibre optics, which can offer faster connectivity speeds to consumers. There is a desire to revise this obligation so that fibre optic, instead of copper lines, are provided by BT Openreach as a minimum to enable open access infrastructure for the provision of fibre broadband to all premises in accordance with Government's aims.
- 13.28 More recently, BT has announced plans to deliver much faster broadband to homes and small businesses through '*G.fast*' which is a new standard for broadband connectivity that enables even higher connection speeds. This innovative technology will be piloted during summer 2015 and, subject to the success of those pilots, is planned for deployment during 2016/17. Therefore, the delivery of such infrastructure through development within the

Borough is not likely to be achieved through this year's Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Telecommunications Infrastructure Requirements

- 13.29 Whilst there is an ongoing need to raise the level of telecommunication infrastructure within the Borough, there are no specific scheme requirements which need to be identified within the IDP. This is because the provision of telecommunication infrastructure is wholly provided through the private sector and, as stated above, providers (including BT Openreach) have an obligation to provide a phone line and network capacity upon request. Therefore, the Council will encourage developers to contact and engage with BT Openreach at the earliest opportunity in the planning and development process.
- 13.30 In addition to this, work will continue with the abovementioned Connected Counties Broadband Project to upgrade the network of cabinets with a view to achieving the target of providing over 90% of homes and businesses within the Borough with superfast fibre broadband.

Cost and Funding of Provision

- 13.31 The Connected Counties Programme has attracted significant investment in telecommunications infrastructure. This includes contributions from (amongst others) Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the infrastructure provider, BT Openreach. This investment is expected to deliver the target of providing superfast broadband to 95% of homes and business across both Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, which will include improvements within Dacorum, by December 2017
- 13.32 It is likely that developer contributions will not be required as a result of the Council granting planning permission for development proposals. The Council has not identified telecommunications infrastructure as a beneficiary of CIL funding upon its Regulation 123 list.

