**Local Plan - Digital Infrastructure Policy (Draft)**

**1 Draft Policy: Digital Infrastructure**

1.1 Digital connectivity is highlighted in the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 as being essential to support inclusive economic growth and social well-being. The availability of high quality communications is vital to modern day business operations from payments to supply chain management and research projects, as well providing essential access to residents for online services, education and the ability to stay in contact with family & friends. Therefore, it is important that new developments provide access to future-proof gigabit-capable broadband as well as ensuring there is suitable mobile coverage to support Greater Cambridge’s growth ambitions.

1.2 This policy seeks to ensure that all new developments (housing, retail or industrial) have access to high quality communications via the latest generation of high speed gigabit-capable broadband from a choice of providers and mobile coverage that will be suitable for a growing population.

***Policy text***

*Gigabit-capable Fixed Broadband:*

*Development proposals must include the provision of full fibre connections, via multiple providers where available, to each premise. This will include provision for multiple infrastructure providers to access the site. In locations where full fibre connectivity is already available:*

1. *The development will be expected to include the infrastructure to connect to these services and make them available to occupiers.*

*In locations where full fibre connectivity is not currently available:*

1. *Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have engaged a range of providers to upgrade infrastructure to deliver full fibre connections.*
2. *Where one or more providers have agreed to provide full fibre, the development should be designed to connect to this service and make it available to occupiers.*
3. *Where no agreement can be reached to provide full fibre connectivity at the present time, an alternative of Superfast Broadband may be considered. In addition the development will be expected to incorporate dedicated telecommunications ducting to enable the provision of full fibre connectivity in the future.*

*In all cases, to encourage competition and consumer choice, this will include the provision of multiple ducts to enable several providers to access the site.*

*Mobile Coverage:*

*Development proposals of* ***250 homes or over*** *will carry out an assessment of whether the current mobile coverage & capacity is suitable for the proposed new development. This assessment should take the form of a walk or drive test of voice, 4G and 5G (where this is available) mobile coverage for the 4 main Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) at various survey locations within the development area. The results of the survey will be provided in writing to the Local Authority. In locations where mobile coverage is deemed suitable:*

1. *No further action is required however the design of the development should consider the impact of building design on mobile coverage.*

*In locations where mobile coverage is either available but the quality is poor and/or is expected to be impacted by capacity constraints or where coverage is not currently available:*

1. *Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have engaged with MNOs to determine a strategy to ensure that mobile coverage can be improved and maintained at the site.*

1. *Where one or more MNOs agree to make improvements to their mobile coverage it must be confirmed whether this will be via:*
   1. *MNOs adjusting their existing assets to improve coverage for the new development.*
   2. *MNOs and the applicant agreeing a location for additional masts and/or aerials for which the applicant will facilitate installation including the provision of power, full fibre connectivity and maintenance access.*
   3. *Any other approach agreed with the MNO.*
2. *Where no agreement can be reached to improve mobile coverage at the present time, the applicant must ensure that an appropriate location(s) for new mobile infrastructure is made available for future use, this can be in the form of roof-space, building frontage space, highways space or other land, all of which must have suitable access arrangements in place for installation and maintenance for the life of the installed asset. A suitable power supply and fibre connection must be made available to the location(s).*

*5G micro-cells*

*Development proposals of 30 homes or over must include suitable infrastructure for the future rollout of micro-cell 5G telecommunications. As the technology for 5G micro cells is still in development the Local Authority will provide the latest guidance on the design requirements.*

*Connectivity Statement*

*The applicant should demonstrate how the development will meet the requirements of this policy through Connectivity Statements submitted with planning applications.*

**Explanation:**

1.3 The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review published in 2018 sets out the strategy to meet the Government’s target of 100% full fibre coverage of the UK by 2033. The overarching approach is to promote commercial investment by encouraging a competitive market to build fibre infrastructure. The council will maintain up-to-date guidance on any changes to the Government target and policy via the Connecting Cambridgeshire Programme. The guidance will also include details of broadband providers currently operating in the area.

1.4 For developments of a certain scale, assuming that sufficient notice is given (typically at least 12 months prior to first occupation), it is common that provision of Full Fibre broadband connectivity will be offered by providers free of charge. Provided they have sufficient notice, broadband providers will also typically cover the cost of fibre to the premises (FTTP) for developments of 30+ homes. In some cases, however, providers may request a contribution from the developer. The costs of these additional works can be considered as part of a viability assessment.

1.5 For the purposes of this policy, superfast broadband and full fibre are considered to be ‘available’ where the necessary infrastructure exists at or close to the application site and the proposed development can readily be served by it.

1.6 For the purpose of this policy, poor mobile coverage is regarded as a reading below X for outdoor coverage and Y for indoor coverage.

1.7 The Connectivity Statement provided as part of the application should include evidence of the current full fibre connectivity and mobile coverage at the site. This will take the form of connectivity assessments, or similar proof, from at least two broadband infrastructure providers. Free connectivity assessments are available from most broadband providers and will show current/expected speeds at the development site. A Mobile Coverage Assessment detailing the current readings at the site, proposed locations of new mobile infrastructure and confirmation of the communication with MNOs is also expected.