

19th December 2018



**Margot James**  
Minister for Culture, Communications & Creative Industries  
Department for Culture Media & Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

**Chief Executive**  
West Berkshire District Council  
Council Offices  
Market Street Newbury  
Berkshire RG14 5LD

**Our Ref:** nc/rae  
**Your Ref:** TM/A54992  
**Please ask for:** Nick Carter  
**Direct Line:** (b) (6)  
**e-mail:** (b) (6)

Dear Ms James,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Government's proposals to make it a requirement for developers and operators to provide gigabit-capable connections to new homes.

West Berkshire is a largely rural authority, with 74% of its area forming part of the designated North Wessex Downs AONB. In spite of our rurality, however, we are home to a high number of digital tech businesses, have been recognised by ThinkBroadband as having the best rural broadband in the country, and our largest town, Newbury, has been named by Tech Nation as the UK's 'Top Tech Town'. We are incredibly proud of these accomplishments, which we feel have been facilitated, in part, by our strategic decisions as a Council.

If we are to continue to offer residents and businesses the best possible connections in the future, we feel that the Government's policies must, at very least, mandate the installation of the best possible infrastructure into new build properties. We are aware that Ashford Borough Council has made steps towards this requirement through its Local Plan refresh and it is our intention to consult on doing so in our own refresh in the coming year. For this reason, we are very supportive of the measures laid out in the consultation, as they would deliver precisely this.

Turning to the consultation's specific questions;

Q1 – No comment

Q2 – Not in West Berkshire, the Housing market is very buoyant and with our excellent rural broadband there is nothing in our opinion to stop developers investing in this technology as the development is being built out.

Q3 – All Local Planning Authorities should be making this assessment as part of the site selection process with regards to plan making. There is no reason why developers can't do what is suggested. In the past, the absence of competition in delivery of this infrastructure has led to the creation of a number of so-called 'not spots' as well as slower speeds than promised. As a rural authority, we believe that the move outlined in the consultation would offer us reassurance with respect to the feasibility of delivering gigabit-capability to new developments, particularly in our most remote areas, and would give our residents more choice over their provider.

Q4 A) Yes - the point of build is the appropriate time at which to deliver this infrastructure as it is likely to minimise cost to developers and the local authority as well as disruption to our residents, which is one of our primary considerations.

- B) No comment
- C) Yes

Q5 A) Yes

I would be most grateful if you would put on record our support for the principles expressed in this consultation as we feel strongly that they would offer benefits to the residents and businesses of West Berkshire.

Yours sincerely,



**Nick Carter**  
**Chief Executive**