

**WDC Matter 13 Submission - Clarification of Policy BE5: Broadband Infrastructure**

- 1 At the Matter 13 hearings on 13<sup>th</sup> December Policy BE5 (Broadband infrastructure) was discussed.
- 2 This note addresses two issues relating to Policy BE5:
  - a. The Inspector asked for clarification regarding the basis for the threshold of 5 dwellings and 500sqm set out in the first sentence of the Policy.
  - b. Consideration as to whether the provision of High Speed Broadband infrastructure should be “encouraged” rather than “required” (as set out in the draft Policy)
- 3 **The Threshold of 5 dwellings and 500sqm:** At the time the Policy was drafted it was considered that requiring broadband provision for smaller -scale developments could undermine viability. As a result the CSW Broadband team recommended a threshold as set out in the draft Policy. Since that time extensive work has been carried out to ensure effective links between developers and broadband infrastructure providers. Specifically BT Openreach are providing free of charge connectivity in some locations, cofounded connectivity in other locations and an associated with this an online tool to help developers identify whether they need to make financial contributions to connectivity. These measures have reduced (or removed) the cost of broadband and therefore provide the potential to remove the threshold altogether. It should be noted that draft policies prepared by neighbouring local authorities (Coventry and Rugby) do not include a threshold. For further detail please see appendix 1 to this note.
- 4 **Should High Speed Broadband be a requirement:** The CSW Broadband team have met on a number of occasions with Coventry and Warwickshire Planning Officers. As part of these meetings, the CSW Broadband Team has suggested that Planning Policies should require the provision of broadband infrastructure. This is supported by an ever increasing reliance on broadband for everyday activities and for effective business operations. Broadband can therefore be seen as essential for economic growth and social inclusion. The wording of the Policy is further supported by the advice set out in Appendix 1

## Appendix 1: Extract from CSW Broadband Newsletter – February 2016

### Update on broadband on new developments

The government has recently announced that a deal has been reached with Openreach and the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on an agreement which aims to deliver superfast broadband connectivity to new build properties in the UK.

The new deal will see fibre based broadband offered to all new developments either for free or as part of a co-funded initiative. It is estimated that more than half of all new build properties can be connected to fibre broadband free of charge to developers.

As part of the agreement, Openreach is introducing an online planning tool for homebuilders. This will tell them whether properties in a given development can be connected to fibre for free, or if a contribution is needed from the developer to jointly fund the deployment of the local fibre network. Whilst this news is to be welcomed, as it will provide greater transparency over the relationship between developers and BT, it may not actually change anything since the developers will not be **COMPELLED** to provide superfast broadband infrastructure. Also, of course, any development that is built or currently being built will be unaffected by this announcement.

So, a step in the right direction but we still need changes in local and national planning policy to **REQUIRE** broadband infrastructure to be provided on all new developments.

To see the press release in full visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-build-homes-to-have-superfast-broadband-connectivity>