

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM41

Digital Infrastructure

The roll out and continued improvement of digital infrastructure serving all parts of the District will be supported. This includes full-fibre gigabit-capable broadband, 4G and 5G technologies.

Applicants will be required to actively demonstrate that they have considered gigabit-capable broadband and mobile connectivity within their proposals for new residential, employment, and retail developments.

Adverse impacts on the successful functioning of existing digital infrastructure shall be avoided. Where this is not possible, appropriate mitigation shall be provided.

Supporting Text

12.93 Digital infrastructure comprises of physical telecommunications components such as fixed broadband and mobile connectivity. High quality digital infrastructure is key to ensuring economic growth and social inclusion, and this is recognised in the NPPF.

12.94 The NPPF expects planning policies and decisions to support the expansion of digital infrastructure. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments, as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution.

12.95 In March 2020, the Government stated its intention to amend Building Regulations to require all new build developments to have the physical infrastructure to support gigabit connections. At the time of writing Building Regulations remain unchanged. However the LPR policy has had regard to this.

The six Berkshire authorities⁽¹⁴²⁾, including West Berkshire District Council, are implementing a Digital Strategy and have set-out a “Connected Berkshire Vision and Strategy” to ensure that over 95% of households and business have access to full fibre coverage (providing Gigabit capable connectivity) and to eliminate all 4G poor coverage areas by 2025. A suite of guidance is being produced by the six authorities to support the Digital Strategy which will act as good practice for developers to help them determine the best solution for their proposals.

12.96 With this in mind, the Council will expect all new residential and employment generating premises commercial premises to be served by high speed reliable gigabit-capable broadband, wherever possible in the form of fibre to the premises (FTTP), or any new or alternative technologies that may come forward during the lifetime of the Local Plan. Where it is not currently viable to deliver FTTP broadband, the fastest viable alternative connection should be provided, together with adequate ducting to allow FTTP connections to be made easily at a later date, without the additional costs of retrofitting.

12.97 Applications for major residential and employment development will be expected to be supported by a connectivity strategy which demonstrates how the development delivers future-proofed infrastructure and supports sustainable communications services, having regard to the latest appropriate Building Digital UK⁽¹⁴³⁾ strategy and other relevant industry guidance. Developers should engage with broadband providers at the earliest opportunity to enable the highest possible internet connection speeds to be provided in new developments.

12.98 The Council will work with the telecommunications industry to maximise access to super-fast broadband, wireless hotspots and improved mobile signals for all residents and businesses, assisting them in delivering their investment plans and securing funding to address any infrastructure deficiencies or barriers, including through the Superfast Berkshire project⁽¹⁴⁴⁾.

142 Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group: <https://www.berkshiredig.org.uk/about>

143 Building Digital UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/building-digital-uk>

144 Superfast Broadband Project: <http://www.superfastberkshire.org.uk/>