

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2581

Title: Implementation of Policy SI 6 of the London Plan

Executive summary:

This decision form seeks approval of expenditure of up to £50,000, for the Connected London team to procure a consultant to provide support and guidance to implement Policy SI 6 of the London Plan. The consultant will meet with key stakeholders including developers, councils, telecoms operators and government to develop technical and practical London Plan Guidance (LPG) to sit alongside Policy SI 6.

The guidance will be used by housing developers and councils to ensure compliance with the London Plan, and to play a role in supporting adoption through Local Plans.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Transport, infrastructure and Connectivity approves the expenditure of up to £50,000 to commission an expert consultant to support with the development and implementation of planning guidance to sit alongside Policy SI 6.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Tim Steer

Position: Assistant Director of Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity

Signature:



Date: 06 June 2022

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Policy SI 6 of the London Plan (see appendix 1) sets a minimum standard for full-fibre digital connectivity for all end-users in all new business and residential developments, as well as major area developments, in the capital. This means that every new building in London will be assured access to fast and reliable internet. It will also ensure that developers make provisions for mobile coverage. For the first time, London will have specific planning policy to drive full-fibre connectivity and improve mobile network coverage.
- 1.2. The policy addresses the Mayor's manifesto commitments to improve digital connectivity by requiring full-fibre broadband and mobile coverage for all new builds. The Plan also helps the Mayor realise his ambition in the Smarter London Together Roadmap for London to be the smartest city in the world.
- 1.3. To support implementation of the policy, clear technical and practical guidance is required for developers – guidance that is relevant to submitting applications and considering their compliance with SI 6. Guidance will include contents agreed by planning and industry, and will draw from sources including legislation and Ofcom, the telecoms regulator.
- 1.4. Thinkbroadband reports that, during 2020, 153,555 new residential builds were built in the UK.¹ Of these new-builds, 90 per cent received full-fibre connections. The remaining 10 per cent received copper connections, 0.6 per cent of which were below the Universal Service Obligation. This cycle of building homes with legacy infrastructure will be stopped by Policy SI 6.
- 1.5. In a Cluttons report, 'The Connectivity Commercial Impact Report',² almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of commercial tenants said offices that are not well connected will become obsolete spaces in the future. This demonstrates how much more important digital connectivity has become for businesses.
- 1.6. LPG documents are material considerations in planning decisions. The expectation is that they will be taken into account by London Planning Authorities (LPAs) when drawing up local plans and other planning documents.
- 1.7. The Connected London and London Plan teams are working closely to support implementation of Policy SI 6. The GLA now requires expert advice to provide further guidance to implement the policy. A specialist consultant with experience and technical knowledge in developing infrastructure guidance is required, as this function does not currently exist within the GLA.
- 1.8. This consultancy will be procured in accordance with the GLA Contracts and Funding Code.

¹ Thinkbroadband, [New build homes update Summer 2021 - levels of superfast and full fibre coverage](#), 2 September 2021

² Cluttons, [The commercial connectivity impact report](#), 2019

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The key objectives and expected outcomes are as follows:

- Future-proofing London's digital connectivity requirements by ensuring that the gold standard for digital connectivity is set as a minimum standard for London's fixed line and mobile connectivity.
- Improving digital connectivity across the capital with a focus on capability, affordability, security and resilience.
- Developing clear technical and practical guidance for housing developers to self-certify and ensure compliance with the Policy SI 6 of the London Plan. Equally, the guidance will support planning officers across local authorities to ensure development proposals are compliant with the Plan.
- Guidance to include technical elements on design specification of buildings to enable full-fibre deployment with mechanisms put in place to enable further future infrastructure upgrades. Developers will be encouraged to consult with fixed-line operators to help with design specification to avoid and mitigate against risks.
- Separate guidance to support the provision of mobile coverage, so that coverage and capacity is at the forefront of the development and should not have detrimental impacts on the digital connectivity of neighbouring buildings. Developers will be encouraged to consult with mobile operators to help identify any adverse impact on mobile or wireless connectivity, and appropriate measures to avoid/mitigate them.
- Guidance will aim to help mobile operators benefit from their infrastructure planning applications being approved on the first attempt, to ensure London's dismissal rates are more akin to the UK average.
- Ensure that the guidance will have the ability to support and enable London's local authorities to update their digital connectivity Local Plans.

3. Equality comments

3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as public authorities, the Mayor and the GLA are subject to a public-sector equality duty and must have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status.

3.2. This work will support the implementation of the London Plan and the delivery of fixed-line broadband and mobile infrastructure through the planning system. It is anticipated that this will have a positive impact on protected characteristic groups through facilitating the provision of improved digital connectivity. Research undertaken as part of the Digital Access for All mission shows that older Londoners; those with disabilities and learning difficulties; those with a minority ethnic origin, culture and language; those based in areas where connectivity is poor; and those on

a low income are more likely to be digitally excluded. The 2016-17 Family Resources Survey³ reports that 56 per cent of adult internet non-users are disabled, even though disabled adults only make up 22 per cent of the UK population. Some 60% of internet non-users aged 16-24, according to the report, are disabled.

According to an Age UK report, 'Mind the digital gap: older Londoners and internet use during the pandemic',⁴ one in four of older Londoners over 65 would like to use the internet more. Digital skills, access to data and devices are cited as the primary reasons for digital exclusion.

4. Other considerations

4.1. The risks associated with this project are limited and set out below.

Risk description	Inherent score	Mitigation	Target score
The work takes longer than expected.	Likelihood: 2 Impact: 3 Total: 6	The contract for services will provide assurance that work will be carried out to the specified programme. A stakeholder list for use by the consultant as part of the work already exists and is updated regularly as required, which should reduce the likelihood of unexpected delays. Regular project updates will be sought through the duration of the project.	Likelihood: 1 Impact: 2 Total: 2
The budget for the work is exceeded.	Likelihood: 2 Impact: 2 Total: 4	The scope of the work and fees will be agreed in the contract for services.	Likelihood: 1 Impact: 2 Total: 2
The work is of insufficient quality.	Likelihood: 2 Impact: 3 Total: 6	The scope of the work will be agreed in the contract for services. The guidance's produced will be reviewed internally in detail before being published.	Likelihood: 1 Impact: 2 Total: 2

Link to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. The Mayor is committed to increasing full-fibre and mobile availability in London by implementing the strongest digital connectivity policies through the London Plan. Policy SI 6 over-delivers against Part R1 of the Building Regulations 2010, which requires buildings to be equipped with at least 30 MB/s ready in-building physical infrastructure.
- 4.3. The Digital Access for All mission is for "every Londoner to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025". Implementation of Policy SI 6 will ensure that all new builds in London will benefit from gigabit-capable speeds and mobile connectivity that Londoners need.

³ Department for Work and Pensions, [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2016/17](#), 22 March 2018

⁴ Age UK, [Mind the digital gap: older Londoners and internet use during the pandemic](#), July 2021

4.4. Mission 3 of The Smarter London Together Roadmap states: “Consider planning powers, like requiring full-fibre to the home for all new developments, to enhance connectivity in the future.”

4.5. The Economic Development Strategy states:

“The Mayor will tackle the barriers to provision of fast, reliable digital connectivity through a comprehensive programme including: appointing a dedicated team in City Hall, promoting best practice and innovation, developing guidance, advocating the use of public sector assets for digital connectivity and championing the use of standardised agreements.”

4.6. There are no conflicts of interest to note for the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

4.7. No issues relating to data protection, health or safeguarding arise from the initiative set out in this form.

5. Financial comments

5.1 Approval is sought for the expenditure of £50,000 on the procurement of a consultant to provide support and advice in implementing planning guidance related to the London Plan.

5.2 This expenditure will be funded by the Data and Devices programme within the approved Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity budget allocation for 2022-23.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Finalise specification for procurement	July 2022
Procurement	July/August 2022
Consultant start date	October 2022
Consultant completes draft guidance	January 2023
London Plan team review/sign-off guidance	February 2023
GLA publishes guidance	March 2023
Arrange training/workshop for LPAs	April 2023

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1: London Plan – The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, March 2021

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Sara Kelly has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

Corporate Investment Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on
06 June 2022

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date 07 June 2022

Appendix 1: London Plan – The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, March 2021

Policy SI 6: Digital Connectivity Infrastructure (pages 376-380)

- A To ensure London's global competitiveness now and in the future, development proposals should:
- 1) ensure that sufficient ducting space for full-fibre connectivity infrastructure is provided to all end users within new developments, unless an affordable alternative 1GB/s-capable connection is made available to all end users
 - 2) meet expected demand for mobile connectivity generated by the development
 - 3) take appropriate measures to avoid reducing mobile connectivity in surrounding areas; where that is not possible, any potential reduction would require mitigation
 - 4) support the effective use of rooftops and the public realm (such as street furniture and bins) to accommodate well-designed and suitably located mobile digital infrastructure.
- B Development Plans should support the delivery of full-fibre or equivalent digital infrastructure, with particular focus on areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access.
- 9.6.1 The provision of digital infrastructure is as important for the proper functioning of development as energy, water and waste management services and should be treated with the same importance. London should be a world-leading tech hub with world-class digital connectivity that can anticipate growing capacity needs and serve hard to reach areas. Fast, reliable digital connectivity is essential in today's economy and especially for digital technology and creative companies. It supports every aspect of how people work and take part in modern society, helps smart innovation and facilitates regeneration.
- 9.6.2 London's capability in this area is currently limited by a range of issues, including the availability of fibre and the speeds delivered. The industry regulator Ofcom publishes the data on digital connectivity coverage on which Figure 9.5 is based, but there are some limitations to the practicality of the data that is collected. Further work will be done to accurately identify locations in the capital where current connectivity provisions are not suitable for the needs of the area.
- 9.6.3 Better digital connectivity with a focus on capability, affordability, security, resilience and the provision of appropriate electrical power supply should be promoted across the capital. The specific requirements of business clusters, such as a symmetrical-capable service with the same upload and download speeds, should also be met.
- 9.6.4 Given the fast pace at which digital technology is changing, a flexible approach to development is needed that supports innovation and choice. Part R1 of the Building Regulations 2010 requires buildings to be equipped with at least 30 MB/s ready in-building physical infrastructure, however new developments using full-fibre to the property or other higher-grade infrastructure can achieve connectivity speeds of 1GB/s. Developers should engage early with a range of network operators, to ensure that development proposals are designed to be capable of providing this level of connectivity to all end users. Mechanisms should also be put in place to enable further future infrastructure upgrades. Innovation is driving reductions in the size of infrastructure, with marginal additional unit costs, but greater digital connectivity is needed in more locations.

- 9.6.5 Development proposals should also demonstrate that mobile connectivity will be available throughout the development and should not have detrimental impacts on the digital connectivity of neighbouring buildings. Early consultation with network operators will help to identify any adverse impact on mobile or wireless connectivity and appropriate measures to avoid/mitigate them.
- 9.6.6 Access for network operators to rooftops of new developments should be supported where an improvement to the mobile connectivity of the area can be identified. Where possible, other opportunities to secure mobile connectivity improvements should also be sought through new developments, including for example the creative use of the public realm.
- 9.6.7 For some types of development (such as commercial) specific requirements regarding communications access and security may apply. Data centres, in particular, depend on reliable connectivity and electricity infrastructure. Warehouse-based data centres have emerged as a driver of industrial demand in London over recent years and this will need to be taken into account when assessing demand for industrial land (see Policy E4 Land for industry, logistics and services to support London's economic function, Policy E5 Strategic Industrial Locations (SIU, Policy E6 Locally Significant Industrial Sites and Policy E7 Industrial intensification, co-location and substitution).
- 9.6.8 The Mayor will work with network operators, developers, councils and Government to develop guidance and share good practice to increase awareness and capability amongst boroughs and developers of the effective provision of digital connectivity and to support the delivery of policy requirements. The Mayor will also help to identify spatial gaps in connectivity and overcome barriers to delivery to address this form of digital exclusion, in particular through his Connected London work. Boroughs should encourage the delivery of high-quality world-class digital infrastructure as part of their Development Plans.
- 9.6.9 Digital connectivity supports smart technologies in terms of the collection, analysis and sharing of data on the performance of the built and natural environment, including for example, water and energy consumption, waste, air quality, noise and congestion. Development should be fitted with smart infrastructure, such as sensors, to enable better collection and monitoring of such data. As digital connectivity and the capability of these sensors improves, and their cost falls, more and better data will become available to improve monitoring of planning agreements and impact assessments, for example related to urban design. Further guidance will be developed to make London a smarter city.