**City of London case study**

*We have been working with Openreach, the UK’s largest broadband network provider, to bring residents and businesses within the City faster and more reliable broadband.*

It is vital that residents of the Square Mile have access to the very latest, future-proof communications network. Of 23,500 businesses in the City, 99% are small-to-medium enterprises and it is critical that they can compete on a global platform. Full fibre (Fibre to the Premises or FTTP) infrastructure is key to giving them that opportunity. Despite the City benefitting from nine fibreoptic networks serving larger businesses, residents and smaller businesses still struggled to access better broadband.

The City of London Corporation reached out to several full fibre infrastructure builders to encourage them to invest in the City.

Openreach supported this ambition and what we created together was a strategy for digital transformation. Openreach’s [Fibre First programme](https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/fibre-first) is taking the ambitions at the heart of London into account, to enable growth of small businesses and to provide residents with greater quality-of-life benefits provided by full fibre.

**Working together**

Through our positive working relationship with the Openreach team, we’ve been able to give businesses and residents access to the broadband they want and need. It is also ready for whatever future technologies are introduced so, as our need for more bandwidth increases, with new devices and software constantly coming to the market, we’re ready for it.

The build process has been accelerated by Openreach’s flexible approach to installation with engineers carrying out a significant amount of work through the night, to prevent disruption in traffic sensitive areas and minimised disturbance across the City generally.

Openreach approached the build in a way that was practical for the City by using existing ducts meaning less street works and disruption, and faster install.

**Learning opportunities**

We’re also learning a lot from this process. We’ve been looking at ways we could work to help speed up delivery in partnership with Openreach.

We agreed with Openreach at high-level meetings that we would provide a dedicated officer to help with street works permits and access, and a standardised wayleave was used to speed up legal consents.

We understand that other cities have signed an enablers charter with Openreach, and we support this as a way of going forward. It would speed up delivery and reduce the burden on highways through bulk permitting and early collaboration.

We believe that it is important that social housing is offered up provision of full fibre for residents. It is really important to us that all of our communities have access reliable broadband, and our most vulnerable residents are high on our priority list.

Allowing Openreach and other operators faster access to social housing properties would make a huge difference to these communities, allowing the flexibility to work from home and access services and applications to make life easier. This includes video conferencing and fast upload and download speeds to make it easier to work from home, as well as creating enough bandwidth for gaming and streaming HD films, while using as many devices as a modern family needs. There are also more and more opportunities for online training courses, finding employment and socialising online, for everyone.

The wayleave process still needs some improvements and the main issues are time and cost. The City of London Corporation has made a pioneering step by introducing the UK’s first standardised wayleave toolkit, to speed up broadband install times. But more needs to be done to cut down the time spent on agreeing wayleaves and to agree a reasonable approach to legal fees and surveyors’ fees. Without the right process in place, residents in our city are potentially missing out on accessing better broadband.

**A great result**

The new fibre infrastructure means faster and more reliable broadband at all the locations Openreach has had access to. This has enhanced the day-to-day lives of the people that live and work in the area by giving them more options for work, entertainment and socialising. Previously some residents even struggled to access iPlayer and other commonly used services.

That’s because access to full fibre means more video conferences, online working, and less travel to meetings across the country. More than 522,000 people work here every day but cutting travel costs could make a real difference to reducing London’s overall carbon footprint and helping our planet too. Giving people the options to work from home is always important, never more so than with the current health concerns in the UK. Previously small businesses would struggle to do straightforward things like uploading or downloading files, which could even take all day.

It also gives residents access to a wider range of communications providers, giving consumers a much wider choice of broadband provider, as well as competitive pricing options.

“Digital technologies are the future and that’s why it is such a priority in the City of London to be future-proofing and looking ahead. We are making sure our communities have access to the technology they need, both for today and tomorrow, and we’re excited to be leading the way.”

**Catherine McGuinness**

**Chair of Policy & Resources Committee, City of London Corporation**

**Looking forward**

This ongoing investment from Openreach, alongside 5G and our own digital ambitions, mean that we can look to smart city and innovative infrastructure opportunities with the aim of improving the quality of life in the city for our residents and businesses.

This offers even more potential as we can collect data about how resource, services and assets are used around the City, to make it more efficient for everyone. From transport to our utilities, from schools and hospitals to crime detection and prevention, there are many ways we can use data to make our city work more effectively. For instance, social housing repairs often rely on a physical reporting system, but better understanding of data and reporting could mean that issues are dealt with much faster and without the need for physical reporting.

As we move into a world where more and more is done over the internet, including our calls which rely less on the existing copper networks, this work puts the City of London in an excellent position.