

# eHampshire Response to Lord Carter's Digital Britain Interim Report

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## Executive Summary

It seems generally accepted that the universal availability of a high bandwidth broadband network is crucial to future economic prosperity and in particular the move towards a knowledge-driven economy.

1. How will Government ensure the provision of even a 2Mb/s service to rural communities?

Action 17 of the interim Carter Report refers to a digital universal service commitment, by 2012 to up to 2Mb/s.

For this action to have any meaning we read "up to 2 Mb/s" as a service delivering 2Mb/s.

However, Ofcom's recent announcement of a regulatory regime that will allow BT to invest £1.5bn. to deliver a 50 Mb/s broadband to 10 million British homes (and statements from Virgin Media that it will provide a high bandwidth to 20 million homes) offers very little for rural areas remote from BT exchanges.

In Hampshire we estimate that 29% of Hampshire's rural post codes (households) receive a service of no faster than 0.5 Mb/s and 47% of rural post codes are below the 2 Mb/s target. The merits of working from home are too well known to require repetition here.

It appears that the Report assumes that the Community Broadband Network will co-ordinate the delivery of a rural service whereas the CBN does not see itself as a delivery agency. If local communities wish to pursue their own programmes can this be supported/encouraged within a national framework?

2. Planning Requirement for House builders to install necessary ducting for fibre optic broadband

A second pre-requirement for the universal provision of at least 2Mb/s broadband is a clearer requirement from Government that all new homes should at least have the necessary cabling for fibre. The recession means that the construction of the hundreds of thousand of new homes agreed in Local Development Frameworks (to meet regional housing targets to 2026) will be delayed.

The Department of Communities and Local Government Planning Guidance "Data Ducting Infrastructure for New Homes (2008)" is only advisory. Neither planners nor developers need to comply with its encouragement to provide ducting for fibre broadband.

This lack of a requirement means planners cannot require developers to provide for fibre through Planning Conditions or Planning Agreements which in turn leads to a completely inconsistent and unsatisfactory response to the economic imperative that Digital Britain highlights.

The Guidance Note should become a Planning requirement enshrined in Building Regulations and referred to in a revised Planning Policy Statement.

## Foreword

The eHampshire Partnership has been operating for 7 years as a partnership of local authorities, public bodies and relevant private businesses with the aim of promoting the use of ICT and the development of a universally available broadband service. In the first case this was operating as an aggregator of demand to ensure demand trigger points for xDSL enablement were reached and then to provide solutions for the final three exchanges which were not enabled for broadband by BT's commercial activity. This was completed in 2007 (via a competitive tendering process, locating funds from the RDA, Hampshire County Council and the relevant District Authorities) and all 114 BT telephone exchanges in Hampshire now provide a DSL broadband service. Initial analysis 18 months after enablement shows that these last 3 exchanges have take-up rates in excess of 70% reinforcing the high value that rural populations place on broadband services.

eHampshire promotes ICT, flexible working, skills and learning and the advantages of ICT to disabled and excluded groups across Hampshire, eHampshire has successfully brought 2 Everybody On Line projects to the county (Leigh Park – Portsmouth, and Alamein – Andover) and is very much concerned with a holistic view of the impact ICT can have across the community, from public services to entrepreneurial activity and social benefit.

## Infrastructure

### Rural Broadband

Despite this enablement programme there are significant areas of the county that are not able to receive adequate broadband services.

eHampshire commissioned Point Topic to provide a postcode analysis of predicted broadband speeds and has highlighted:

- 28% of postcodes receive a service of less than 2Mb/s
- 8% get less than 512Kb/s

Notes:

- postcodes represent 14 dwellings, therefore this can be taken as an estimate of the population affected.
- widespread deployment of ADSL2+ will not significantly change this figure..

#### DSL Standards estimated broadband speeds in Hampshire (by Postcode) – Summer 2008

Bandwidths	Urban >10K	Town and Fringe	Village	Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings	Grand Total
Out of Range	69	12	80	103	264
0.01 - 0.50 Mbps	2644	546	1106	886	5182
0.51 - 1.00 Mbps	3078	211	682	470	4441
1.01 - 2.00 Mbps	2980	103	437	300	3820
2.01 - 4.00 Mbps	4094	70	404	325	4893
4.01 - 8.00 Mbps	10760	499	684	547	12490
8.01 - 10.00 Mbps	2645	231	145	84	3105
10.01 - 12.00 Mbps	2438	289	175	92	2994
12.01 - 16.00 Mbps	5826	964	386	181	7357
16.01 - 50.00 Mbps	3158	742	402	58	4360
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37692</b>	<b>3667</b>	<b>4501</b>	<b>3046</b>	<b>48906</b>

Not at all good spots:

Most of these service 'not at all good spots' are located in rural areas, some are isolated houses, others are clusters and groups of houses in hamlets and small villages of 50 to 100 houses, all are linked by the same common issues:

- lack of service
- social divide and exclusion from
  - education and skills development for children and adults
- access to products and services offered by the Digital Revolution
  - from cheaper car insurance to the BBC iPlayer
  - affecting social cohesion and community viability

The villages of Bradley close to Basingstoke (mentioned in the Carter Report as Bradnet) and Little London are just two cases in point.

It should also be noted that whilst these may appear to be affluent rural locations many are actually suffering from considerable deprivation when considering access to local government services public utilities, local shops and services. Activities such as smarter working are part of the process of re-invigorating local communities and dormitory villages by allowing people, who otherwise out commute, to work from home, reducing carbon footprint and helping to bring spend back into local shops. In order for this to happen there has to be a suitable infrastructure.

## **Urban Broadband**

Basingstoke:

The eHampshire project undertook a study of broadband availability in Basingstoke following anecdotal evidence from residents of poor broadband performance (the full report is attached as a separate document).

The residents of Basingstoke are served by broadband from Cable operator Virgin Media and BT Wholesale and has Market 3 categorisation under the OfCom classification.

However, Basingstoke is a new town, developed from the 1970's with new housing stock built around the outer edge, the estates and suburbs served from the central exchange. The result of this development pattern is that 19,000 of the 40,000 telephone lines attached to the exchange are in excess of 5km in length, offering broadband of less than 2Mb/s, a further 9,300 dwellings are planned for the town and yet no additional provision of xDSL or FTTC services are being made by BT/Openreach or Virgin Media..

Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council see this as a strategic issue for the town which is named as a Diamond for Growth under the Regional Economic Strategy.

#### Development Plans:

Currently it is perceived that broadband provision on the South East is adequately provided by the private sector, it is eHampshire's assertion that this is not the case, and that significant parts of the regional (and Hampshire in particular) are underserved.

The eHampshire Partnership (on behalf of its member organisations) would like to put forward to the Carter Review that more should be done to assist local authorities in addressing the needs of residents and citizens who live in areas that are not served by effective broadband services, for instance setting a benchmark or a standard code of practice for using public service infrastructure as a back haul for wholesale service delivery in rural locations and to the exploration of Joint Venture projects (such as the scheme in Gateshead) between public sector bodies and commercial providers.

#### New build specifications:

The eHampshire project would also like to propose that new build locations include the provision of ducting and utility (service) buildings for developers.

#### Business Simplification Process, the role for partners:

Under the terms of the BSSP some agencies believe that all Business Support Services should be delivered by a single body, namely Business Link.

It is the assertion of eHampshire and its members that programmes such as the eHampshire partnership can play an active and supporting role to Business Link, and other bodies, in providing localised and specific training and support to individuals and businesses (via eCommerce Workshops, eLadder and Smarter Working programmes) which directly reflect the needs of the local community.

This can be witnessed by the 1,000 businesses that have attended workshops over the past 18 months or the work that eHampshire has carried out to highlight issues faced by residents of Basingstoke and the most recent Hampshire County Council Rural Services Review (summary attached) which showed broadband to be the number one consideration of rural populations.