

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Draft NPF4 supports the roll-out of digital infrastructure across the country, to ensure that no areas are left behind. The planning system should recognise the importance of future-proofing infrastructure provision while addressing impacts on local communities and the environment.

Local Development Plans should:

- support the delivery of digital infrastructure, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access.

Development proposals:

- should incorporate appropriate, universal and future-proofed digital infrastructure;
- that deliver new digital services or provide technological improvements should be supported, particularly in areas with no or low connectivity;
- for telecommunications development should be supported where the visual impact has been minimised, all alternative sites have been considered and there is no physical obstruction to aerodrome operations, technical sites or existing transmitter/receiver facilities;
- which are likely to have an adverse effect on the operation of existing digital infrastructure or on the delivery of strategic roll out plans should not be supported unless appropriate mitigation measures can be provided.

Responses to the Position Statement

There was general support for the prioritisation of improved digital connectivity, and its importance in enabling home working and reducing travel was noted. Some respondents noted the inequality of access to high quality digital connectivity and linked this to economic deprivation.

Policy changes

The proposals in Draft NPF4 build on the policy principles outlined in NPF3 and SPP, which highlighted the importance of our digital infrastructure across towns and cities and in more remote rural and island areas. Draft NPF4 adds to these principles the need to protect existing and planned digital infrastructure from any potential adverse effects of new development.