



**Colchester**  
Ultra Ready for Business

# Connecting Colchester Our Digital Strategy - 2017-22 Abridged Version





# Introduction

**Colchester is best known as Britain's oldest recorded town and first city. Now, this Digital Strategy 2017-22, sets out an exciting vision of Colchester Borough as the best-connected place in the East of England, and a magnet for the creative, media and technically innovative industries.**

**The Strategy builds on Colchester's strong position as a leading regional creative hub, to set out how the digital transformation, started by the deployment of ultra-fast broadband and the opening of 37 Queen Street ("the Creative Business Centre"), will grow into a key driver of the Borough's economy in the years ahead.**

**The Strategy sets out how Colchester will achieve and make the best possible use of, world-class connectivity, including future 5G mobile telephony, across both the urban and rural parts, in addition to the Borough's key economic development zones.**

**The Digital Strategy is designed to enhance and build on the Borough's Economic Development Strategy, to help deliver the infrastructure and the investment required to secure value-added employment for a rapidly growing population.**



## What has been achieved to date?

Colchester Borough is undergoing a £3bn investment-driven transformation. The Borough's growth is bringing with it new housing, an enriched cultural and leisure offer, as well as new opportunities for business and, critically, better skilled and higher-paying jobs.

In February 2017, Colchester Borough Council launched its "Colchester Ultra-ready" inward investment campaign. This builds on the Council's decision, in 2015, to re-furbish its CCTV network to deliver gigabit connectivity for the Town Centre. Known as "ultra-fast", up to 50 times faster than the more familiar "super-fast", this level of connectivity promises to fundamentally change how we use the internet and connected services in the years ahead. Colchester is also among the leading authorities in updating its planning guidelines to promote the uptake and expansion of pure-fibre broadband connectivity.

### Ultra-fast Colchester

*Following the installation by Colchester Borough Council of an ultra-fast fibre network, businesses in the town centre can now enjoy speeds higher than 99% of those available across the UK.*

## A Borough focused on the digital future

The next decade will see a dramatic increase in demand for ultra-fast connectivity, driven by Smart Cities, the introduction of 5G mobile technology, ultra-high-definition video streaming services and the "Internet of Things" (a mesh of connected devices, including household appliances and personal, health monitors). Colchester Borough Council's Digital Strategy aims to deliver the best economic and social outputs from these innovations, ensuring a future-proofed infrastructure will be in place to cope with future demands.

Colchester's population is predicted to grow by 9.6% - some 17,000 people - over the coming decade. Providing high quality employment opportunities to this growing population demands the Council makes the best use of the available employment land. This guiding principle has been embedded in the parts of the Digital Strategy focused on the Northern Gateway, as well as East and West Colchester.

Colchester can successfully position itself as a leader among the UK towns and cities vying for investment in digital innovation, mobile telephony of the future, software development and the development of "smart" devices. The Strategy describes how ultra-fast and the "Smart City" technologies it enables, can be best shaped to the profile of the economy of the Borough. Key interfaces with the education, care and health sectors are identified, as well as how the challenges of road congestion, air quality and the ever-growing demand for energy, can be better addressed.



# Our Plans

**To achieve the aim of making the Borough the best-connected in the East of England by 2022, the Council will implement considered, economically viable, funded and risk-assessed projects to:**

Secure direct fibre connections at all new major developments and regeneration projects. Changes introduced in 2016 to the Borough's planning guidelines aim to encourage fibre-to-the-premises on all new projects. These guidelines have been agreed with industry and are now available to all developers. Colchester is one of the very first local authorities in the UK to pioneer this approach to ensuring fibre-to-the-premises connectivity is treated as an essential utility.

The Council will optimise the investment potential of business parks in North Colchester, and commercial developments in Stanway, by securing direct fibre connections in all major business parks. The Borough will work with the major telecommunications operators and the Essex Superfast project's forthcoming phases, focused on increased fibre connectivity, to ensure the tenants at the Borough's business parks have access to affordable, world-class connectivity. The Northern Gateway sport and leisure facilities, will have ultrafast connectivity at the earliest stage.

Secure innovative fibre services for rural customers and businesses, ensuring the Borough's rural two-thirds are as well-served as the urban areas. The Council will build on its existing relationships with the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Ofcom's consultation processes, to make Colchester Borough a pioneer in the delivery of "Fibre on Demand" services to rural customers and businesses.

Promote deeper cooperation between the leading 5G research facilities and the mobile operators, by capitalising on the capacity of Colchester's ultra-fast fibre infrastructure to make the Town Centre one of the first 5G testbeds in the UK. This will serve to raise the profile of Colchester Borough not just among regional businesses, but as an attractive investment destination for technology businesses from much further afield, including Europe.



*More than 5km of new duct, and 8km of fibre optic cables, were installed during the deployment of the Town Centre fibre optic network in 2016*





Demonstrate the clear economic benefits of the transition to an “all-fibre” town, acting as a trendsetter in leading the move away from copper-based connectivity solutions. Colchester will take advantage of all the opportunities to introduce business connection vouchers as part of the announcements of the 2016 Autumn Statement. This will help the Borough position itself as an attractive location for high-tech investment and innovation, capable of competing with the best-in-class facilities available.

Showcase and promote “Smart City” innovations, fostering digital and technological creativity by developing the best of local talent, particularly in software design and the “internet of things”. The development of connected devices will help Colchester better plan for its growing population, and the challenges of traffic congestion, protecting air quality and helping ensure technological innovation does not come at the expense of the Borough’s high quality of life and environment.

Seek out and promote all relevant opportunities to cooperate with the Borough’s educational institutions and training schemes, with the aim of developing a local pool of skilled resources to cope with the engineering demands of the future. These will form a key element in promoting the growth of value-added employment over the five-year period.

Conduct an initial feasibility study, and pursue potential implementation of the building of an Internet Exchange in the East of England as part of the UK’s critical national infrastructure for resilient internet operations. Every major telecoms provider has fibre passing through the Borough, including key links connecting the UK with mainland Europe. This positions Colchester as the ideal location for an Internet Exchange, where key connections between network backbones are created. Such a facility would be the largest investment in advanced digital technology in the Borough.

*Towards an “all-fibre” town:  
Colchester Borough is ideally placed to benefit from the economic opportunities afforded by the Government’s announcement in the 2016 Autumn Statement of funding streams for the transition to “all fibre” towns. We will seek to ensure the Borough’s businesses can participate in the forthcoming schemes to secure better connectivity, and help showcase the best of local companies working in digital innovation.*



# Colchester: Focused on a Digital Future

The Digital Strategy sets out Colchester's vision to be the best-connected Borough in the East of England, offering all businesses and all new residential developments world-class, future-proofed, affordable connectivity based on pure fibre.

Places need to compete for resources, people and investment. The vision is that this Digital Strategy will quickly bring a market-beating offer of ultrafast broadband/gigabit/fibre connectivity to Colchester's inward investment aspirations working in partnership with a forward-thinking Council engaging with business and industry, central Government, as well as local and regional stakeholders.

The Strategy describes how innovative technology will be used to support the Borough's key, education, care, health and creative sectors, as well as facilitate the emergence of the Borough as a new tech cluster.

It sets out how the jobs of the future will be delivered by ensuring every resident has access to ultrafast connectivity, the novel, life-easing innovations of Smart Cities, blisteringly fast 5G mobile technology and devices forming the Internet of Things.

## Further Information

To discuss the Digital Strategy and the opportunities it presents, please contact:

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