# London’s New London Plan offers crucial chance to fix 5G gaps and boost digital infrastructure



London faces a pivotal moment regarding its digital connectivity infrastructure, with the forthcoming New London Plan presenting a unique opportunity to embed mobile infrastructure as a key element of the city's economic and social fabric. According to Mobile UK, this iteration of the plan must address the serious shortcomings found in previous versions, which have left London trailing behind not only global cities but also other UK cities in terms of 5G performance and overall mobile service quality. Despite London's significant economic contribution—accounting for over 20% of the UK economy with an output of £531 billion in 2023—its median 5G download speeds lag far behind leaders like Glasgow, and it ranks tenth for 5G quality of experience across Europe, far below cities such as Stockholm. This underperformance threatens London’s competitive edge on the world stage.

The challenges in London’s mobile infrastructure deployment are complex and unique. Issues such as around 7% of key rooftop sites being unavailable due to Notices to Quit, coupled with the constant development of tall buildings disrupting network coverage, create significant barriers. Additionally, the borough-by-borough planning system results in inconsistent and often prohibitive pre-application fees—ranging from a few hundred to several thousand pounds—adding financial and administrative burdens on infrastructure providers. These factors combine to create a fragmented and unpredictable environment that hinders swift mobile infrastructure rollout.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a baseline government policy, but the New London Plan must go further by creating a London-centric policy that addresses these distinctive challenges head-on. The Mayor’s office recognises the necessity for the London Plan to be consistent with the NPPF while actively translating those requirements into policies tailored for London. Without a robust and dedicated digital connectivity policy embedded in the plan, London risks stagnation in its mobile network capabilities, which could have a knock-on effect on the city’s economic dynamism and social inclusion.

The London Plan 2021 already includes Policy SI 6, mandating new developments to provide adequate ducting for full fibre connectivity and ensuring mobile connectivity is maintained or enhanced. This policy also supports maximising the use of rooftops and public spaces for digital infrastructure, signaling an awareness of the critical role digital infrastructure plays in sustaining London’s global competitiveness. Complementing this, the Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Guidance, published in late 2024, sets out detailed implementation steps for Policy SI 6, reinforcing the importance of integrating full fibre and mobile infrastructure in both new and existing developments.

Transport for London has also stepped up efforts to enhance digital connectivity, notably through a collaboration with Boldyn Networks aimed at achieving extensive 4G and 5G coverage across the Tube, Elizabeth line, DLR, and Overground networks, including tunnels. This initiative is part of the broader Connected London programme funded by the Greater London Authority, which also aims to improve mobile coverage on major roads and support boroughs in expanding digital infrastructure, including enhanced CCTV capabilities. These efforts reflect a practical attempt to bridge connectivity gaps and promote London as a smarter, safer city.

The Mayor’s commitment to digital inclusion extends beyond infrastructure provisioning. Under the Digital Access for All mission, the goal is for every Londoner to have access to reliable connectivity, basic digital skills, and the necessary devices or support to get online by 2025. The London Plan’s policies exceed national building regulations by requiring buildings to be fitted with infrastructure capable of supporting speeds far beyond the minimum standard, emphasising the city’s ambition to lead in digital provision.

However, despite these steps, the mobile industry's response to the New London Plan calls for a more coherent and ambitious framework that can tackle the inconsistent planning environment and site access challenges unique to London. Industry leaders are ready to invest and build the necessary infrastructure but need clear, supportive policies from the Mayor and the GLA to navigate regulatory complexities and realise a truly connected London. The plan’s success hinges on establishing a strong regional framework that can support and accelerate digital connectivity deployment, ensuring London retains its status as a competitive global city in the digital age.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.politicshome.com/members/article/londons-digital-future-critical-juncture-mobile-infrastructure-new-london-plan)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.politicshome.com/members/article/londons-digital-future-critical-juncture-mobile-infrastructure-new-london-plan)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.politicshome.com/members/article/londons-digital-future-critical-juncture-mobile-infrastructure-new-london-plan)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/london-plan/the-london-plan-2021-online/chapter-9-sustainable-infrastructure), [[3]](https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance/digital-connectivity-infrastructure-guidance)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/improving-digital-connectivity-on-our-network), [[6]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/may/more-stations-and-tube-lines-across-central-london-get-high-speed-mobile-coverage)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/add2581-implementation-policy-si-6-london-plan)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.politicshome.com/members/article/londons-digital-future-critical-juncture-mobile-infrastructure-new-london-plan)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.politicshome.com/members/article/londons-digital-future-critical-juncture-mobile-infrastructure-new-london-plan> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/london-plan/the-london-plan-2021-online/chapter-9-sustainable-infrastructure> - The London Plan 2021 outlines Policy SI 6, which mandates that new developments in London provide sufficient ducting space for full fibre connectivity infrastructure and meet expected demand for mobile connectivity. It also requires measures to avoid reducing mobile connectivity in surrounding areas and supports the effective use of rooftops and public spaces for mobile digital infrastructure. This policy aims to ensure London's global competitiveness by enhancing digital connectivity.
3. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance/digital-connectivity-infrastructure-guidance> - The Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Guidance, published in November 2024, provides detailed instructions on implementing Policy SI 6 of the London Plan. It aims to improve digital connectivity infrastructure delivery through the planning system across London, focusing on both new and existing developments. The guidance emphasizes the importance of full fibre connectivity and mobile infrastructure in future developments to support London's digital future.
4. <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/improving-digital-connectivity-on-our-network> - Transport for London (TfL) is collaborating with Boldyn Networks to enhance digital connectivity across London's transport network. This partnership aims to extend mobile phone coverage across the entire Tube, Elizabeth line, DLR, and Overground lines, including tunnels between stations. The initiative also focuses on improving mobile coverage above ground on major roads and supports London boroughs in expanding connectivity and enhancing CCTV, funded by the Greater London Authority.
5. <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/add2581-implementation-policy-si-6-london-plan> - The Mayor of London 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. The Digital Access for All mission aims for every Londoner to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills, and the device or support they need to be online by 2025.
6. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/may/more-stations-and-tube-lines-across-central-london-get-high-speed-mobile-coverage> - Transport for London (TfL) and Boldyn Networks have expanded high-speed mobile coverage across more stations and Tube lines in central London. The project aims to provide 4G and 5G connectivity throughout the entire London Underground network, enhancing digital inclusion and supporting London's transformation into a smarter and safer city. The initiative is part of the Connected London programme, which seeks to improve digital connectivity across the capital.
7. <https://chiefdigitalofficer4london.medium.com/new-planning-changes-to-boost-digital-connectivity-smart-sensors-in-future-developments-2c7b3e990946> - The Mayor’s London Plan, effective from March 2021, introduces specific planning policies to drive full fibre connectivity and improve mobile network coverage. It also encourages the use of environmental sensors to collect, analyse, and share data to meet climate change goals. These policies aim to ensure that every new building in London has access to fast, reliable, and affordable broadband, benefiting residents and businesses and supporting London's digital future.