

City Fibre Fast Broadband Rollout Case Study

Super-fast direct to customer broadband is being offered by a number of suppliers which requires an extensive upgrade programme to underground infrastructure across large areas of the borough. Suppliers typically seek to provide their own dedicated network which can result in multiple suppliers seeking to install infrastructure in the same road. This can lead to customer frustration, particularly when they take place in the same year.

With roll out plans being seen as commercially sensitive we often receive little forward planning of proposed works programmes which limits our ability to co-ordinate works.

City Fibre over an 18 month period have sought to connect up to 40,000 homes in the borough to their full fibre service. In doing so they have served 2919 permits on hundreds of roads as they have delivered their programme of work.

The resource implications for the permit service have been significant and justified bringing in an additional member of staff on a fixed term basis. This member of staff has been fully funded from the income generated from the permits raised by City Fibre and ensured that suitable resource could be deployed to assess the performance and quality of City Fibres works throughout their build programme.

As part of this process, weekly meetings, site inspections and defect identification has taken place to ensure that the boroughs highway asset is suitably protected throughout and that City Fibre are held to account and respond to customer complaints and concerns in a timely fashion. The positive and collaborative approach over many months has enabled the successful delivery of this first phase of their works with only isolated disruption to the network when considering the size and impact of the works.

Following close down of the project, a lessons learned exercise with City Fibre highlighted a number of issues around working practices and behaviours that the team will apply to similar schemes moving forward including ahead of the 2nd phase of works due to start in Autumn 2022 in Bentley Heath/Dorridge and Knowle wards that will potentially connect a further 10,000 homes.

This improvements in best practice include (Act06):

- (a) Enhanced communication links between City Fibre and residents
- (b) Supervision of workforce by City Fibre in addition to SMBC Permit Compliance Officer.
- (c) Enhanced working practices and oversight in relation to Traffic Management and site management, with a focus on weekend working.
- (d) Improved site cleanliness during and after works.
- (e) Provision of site compound to avoid unnecessary plant on site.
- (f) Cabinet locations/Customer complaints response times