

Gigabit for all: it's time to build homes for the next generation



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Whether it's in the home, for travel, for work or to access the day-to-day services we rely on, connected devices and the internet have become a basic hygiene factor of modern life. And yet, the fastest, most reliable technology – Full Fibre broadband – isn't available to most, with less than half of the UK having access

to a gigabit connection at home¹, dropping to only 35% in rural areas.

With so many vital services now digital by default, and an internet connection so closely woven into the social fabric of our lives, limited connectivity at home isn't just a pain point; it's a harmful barrier. From paying a council tax bill to keeping track of utility costs, from streaming movies to connecting with family, friends, and strangers, from applying for jobs to working from home, the bottom line is that much of our home lives are lived online.

And without the UK's connectivity infrastructure keeping step with

advances in connected technology, the cost isn't simply to our convenience: insufficient connectivity at home can impact everything from our ability to access and act on critical information, participate in society, and ultimately, earn a living.

The connectivity gap is too big for developers to ignore

Little wonder, then, that when estate agents were asked which decision factors are most important for house hunters, 30% ranked high-quality broadband as one of the features buyers were least willing to compromise on, with more than a third looking for a minimum speed of 300mbps.

The Government acknowledges the consumer demand, too. Recognising that the average internet speed of 51mbps in the UK² is quickly becoming insufficient for household needs, it has committed to making gigabit-broadband - the fastest yet

- available nationwide by 2030³. To tackle the disparity of connectivity around the UK, they've introduced a gigabit broadband voucher scheme⁴, providing up to £210m worth of funding for people experiencing slow broadband speeds in rural areas.

The demand for connectivity is evident, and to help developers understand why meeting that demand should be a strategic priority, this paper looks at the drivers motivating buyers, and the Full Fibre solution that is best placed to bring gigabit broadband to all.

20%

of estate agents ranked a strong broadband connection as the most important feature for buyers.

The factors driving buyer demand

1. The moving parts of a home demand connectivity before you even get through the front door

High-speed internet is no longer a luxury; rather, it's quickly becoming as essential a part of the foundations of the 2020s home as bricks and mortar. In June 2022, there were, on average, 17.1 connected devices and smart appliances per home worldwide⁵, up 10% from the previous year. More than 29 billion connected devices are projected⁶ to have been invented by the end of the decade.

And this smart technology is moving far beyond the devices in our pockets, or plug-in appliances. It's now being designed as part of the home itself: from RFID technology that allows keyless access to the property or car park, to the ability to control and monitor heating, lighting, and security alarms remotely from an app. These smart features are becoming rapidly more commonplace due to the convenience and flexibility they bring, and as with the widespread adoption of the Alexa digital helper or the Amazon Firestick, they'll soon become normalised - even becoming an expectation among house buyers.

By ensuring that the building is equipped with high-speed internet connectivity using Full Fibre technology designed to stay relevant as technology evolves over the next generation, developers can attract buyers not only looking for the convenience they need right now, but for the future-proof resale value of their investment in ten or fifteen years' time.

2. Keeping in step with the rise in remote working

Working from home (WFH) is much more common post-pandemic, and while 50% of companies⁷ would like their employees to be back in the office full time, it's looks like the home office is here to stay – for part of the working week, at least. In September 2022⁸, around 22% of the UK workforce had worked at least one day from home in the previous week and around 13% worked from home exclusively. So, buyers need their internet connection to be as good as they'd get in the office, and increasingly are seeking out connectivity that can stand up to the demands of virtual meetings and collaborative online working.

A strong broadband connection has a crucial role to play in improving equality across the workforce, too. With 52% of women⁹ saying that a lack of flexibility has caused them to either leave a job, or consider leaving, the ability to self-manage working hours, job-share, work from home, and hybrid working are all options that are likely to support retention and promotion of talented women. And flexibility better supports new mothers to stay employed, too, as 86% say they'd prefer to work 3-5 days a week¹⁰ to help them juggle the childcare/work balance.

Good broadband is crucial for remote workers to stay connected, productive, and engaged while working from home, and for developers, it enhances the value of their properties while meeting the evolving needs of the modern workforce.

3. Catering to our changing entertainment needs

As well as the increase in working from home, the pandemic has changed our recreational relationship with the internet. With the rise of social media, online gaming, and streaming, the internet has become a much more immersive and engaging place and is quickly becoming the number one place to go when we're in need of a dopamine hit.

This can be seen in the rise of streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, where it is now easier than ever to watch films and TV shows online. In 2018¹¹, 28% of people preferred to watch a film for the first time in the cinema, but by mid-2020, this has dropped to 14%, with people preferring to stream it from their homes. This increase in demand is also seen in the market expansion of the gaming industry¹² which grew by 26% between 2019-2021 and is said to be worth \$321b by 2026.

69%

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, 69% of estate agents have seen an increase in queries about the quality of the broadband connection at a property.

It's not just our streaming and gaming habits which have changed since the pandemic. In a recent survey, over half of the respondents stated they prefer to work out at home¹³ rather than go to the gym. With a variety of apps now available on demand, for meditation, yoga, hit classes, Peloton and even the popular Barry's Bootcamp classes, the home has become the hub for healthy living.

And staying fit and healthy in the home is getting a smart upgrade: brands like VAHA¹⁴ have created fitness mirrors with real-time and virtual classes to help us live our best life without trekking to the gym, while apps such as Inside Tracker¹⁵, have soared in popularity, with ultra-personalised health programmes and guidance tailored to you based on your data. Apps like Calm, Headspace and Betterhelp are supporting more people than ever to look after their mental and emotional health with the help of an internet connection.

With a host of various entertainment options available at our fingertips, not forgetting the growing popularity of live streaming on social media, having a strong broadband connection is essential in making the most of the digital age we now live in.

Boosting house value with strong connectivity

A typical house in the UK could add £16,000 to its value by making energy-saving improvements¹⁶.

And with 24% of adults in the UK considered as having 'low financial resilience', fast, reliable broadband is becoming even more important, allowing individuals to pay closer attention to energy costs and access building management systems, meters and billing points.

It also allows individuals to keep on top of reducing their carbon footprint, which is becoming increasingly paramount, especially among younger generations. Smart homes allow us to control our energy usage and save on monthly bills, allowing us to live sustainably and efficiently.

Without a good broadband connection, the value of a house can be reduced by £38,802¹⁷ and as technology continues to evolve, internet speeds will only become more important in years to come. And with buyers viewing homes as an investment, developers should be too.

70%

of estate agents believe a gigabit broadband service to every home would boost or significantly boost demand for homes in their area.

Why building better connected homes is better for business

It's important to keep ahead of the curve to ensure your developments are not only desirable now, but also in 10 years' time to align with buyers' resale goals.

When it comes to developing, it's expensive to be short-sighted. Retrofitting every few years to meet buyers' needs is time-consuming and expensive, and this is particularly true

of multi-phase developments. Strong broadband connections should be integrated into the design and infrastructure from the beginning to save costs, future-proof the builds and stay ahead of the competition.

The technology that will supply the next generation is already here. Full Fibre 1Gbps is typically 100 x faster than today's average broadband.

Pick the right supplier and the technology will outlast the first and second owner of a property.

With the rise in smart devices, remote working, on demand entertainment, and the value this all adds to house prices, can developers afford not to put strong connectivity at the forefront of their builds?

Why Swish

Swish has a team focused on helping developers to build with buyers in mind by delivering ultrafast fibre broadband on a network that is endlessly upgradable and future-proofed for generations. We're already working with industry leaders Kebbell, Elivia Homes, Palatine, Taylor Wimpey, and Redrow.

With market leading commercial offers available to our partners, our 10 gigabit network has the capacity to power the ever-increasing number of smart devices across your developments.

To futureproof now rather than retrofit later, developers need to think 'Full Fibre'. If you'd like support, talk to our team.

swishfibre.com/property



Swish fibre™

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