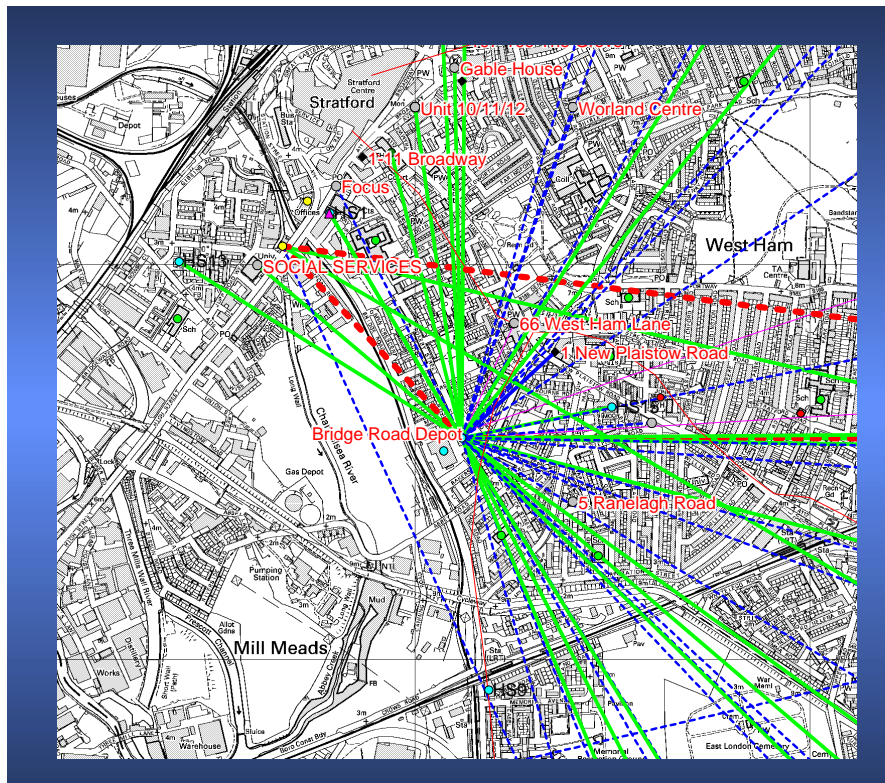


Audit your local Telecommunications Infrastructure and take the first steps towards exploiting the key utility of the 21st century



How to make sure your borough has sufficient bandwidth and the right connections to bring economic prosperity and deliver the modernising agenda.

 **IS** communications Ltd

Networking for Success

Access to high bandwidth and integrated networks will determine economic prosperity in the 21st century.

Without the capacity to send and receive complex digital information through fast and secure networks, some areas simply will not be able to compete in the new global economy. Areas that are now struggling to combat the loss of old industries will be left behind for good, regardless of the amount of regeneration funds pumped into them.

You must act now to ensure you have a telecommunications infrastructure capable of delivering social and public policy goals that focus on integrated citizen services, positioning the UK as a leading e-commerce nation and social inclusion. As part of Best Value, you will want to ensure that your local electronic networks enable you to improve quality as well as save money.

By carrying out a telecommunications audit, you will be able to identify immediate cost savings by improving the effectiveness of your existing networks. As importantly, you will have baseline information about 'what's already there'. This will enable you to develop the telecommunications infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of citizens, current and potential businesses, schools, colleges, universities, libraries, community groups and the council itself.

As a modernising council, you will have plans to look at some, if not all, of the following issues. Success will depend on the ability to deploy broadband applications, share resources, provide integrated public access to services and cut costs.

Seamless Services

- Implement a customer access strategy that includes a call centre, one stop shops and web-enabled communications. Plans may include the use of digital television to help

enhance democracy and provide community information, distance learning and citizens' services in the home.

- Linking public bodies to allow better information sharing and improved services to the public.
- Enabling citizens to use e-communication to liaise with the council – whether it's to pay council tax or lodge a housing repair request.

Community Leadership

- With public access to a network of networks (an Extranet), community information can be accessed from the home and from public access points in the community

Best Value

- There will be short term gains in being able to immediately identify cost savings through rationalisation.
- Reviews of the infrastructure of individual organisations will provide a good opportunity to look at whether new technology could offer immediate benefits.
- The linking up of public sector networks in an area has the potential to offer significant costs savings and efficiency by enabling the use of shared storage and back up facilities, load sharing and greater resilience.
- In the medium term, partners or potential partners within the borough may be able to set up revenue sharing schemes with commercial parties that want to deliver multimedia content or deliver digital services.
- Local companies with spare bandwidth could make it available for the benefit of local people as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Economic Development

- Enable existing SMEs to become e-commerce viable. Passive e-commerce – having a website – is no longer enough. Companies must be able to work within an electronic supply chain. If they can't, their customers will go to a company that can.
- Attract new business – telecommunications are the 'new roads'. Business will locate where there is sufficient bandwidth to meet its needs for increasingly multimedia communication.
- New Planning Guidance highlights the importance of high tech clusters in fostering economic prosperity. Plans for new business parks should, for example, include floodwiring the area.

Life-long Learning

- Develop distance learning and build on the opportunities offered by the NGfL. Students of all ages need access to multimedia training applications and can't wait all day for them to download! Linking schools with high bandwidth means they can become ICT centres for local residents. Also, the linking up of other centres can piggy back on the main schools links, giving lower costs.

What is a local telecommunications audit?

A local telecommunications audit is usually initiated by a local authority or regeneration partnership. It establishes 'where you are now' in terms of existing networks and forms the baseline for assessing whether a borough's application and content requirements can be met by existing networks, upgraded networks or completely new networks.

The audit includes:

- A comprehensive picture of all significant Wide Area and Local Area Networks in an area, showing bandwidth, planned improvements and proximity to each other
- Information about other telecomms infrastructure such as BT and cable which would have the potential to support future developments
- Information as to local topography, masts and tall buildings to indicate the potential for the use of wireless links
- Identification of common issues such as storage, resilience, bandwidth, with suggestions as to how linking up the networks might provide solutions.

Next Steps

To find out more about carrying out a telecommunications audit in your area, please call or email Michael Mulquin

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Michael is chair of Newham Online, a cross sector partnership in one of Britain's most disadvantaged boroughs, which has developed an extranet to serve the community.

Michael is also chair of Newham.net a company limited by guarantee. Newham.net is entering into partnerships to make high connectivity available to local businesses, organisations and people to position the area as a key player in the digital economy. It is on the point of applying to become a local Public Telecommunications Operator.