

Phase 3 State Aid Public Consultation – General Feedback and Responses by Superfast Essex

The Superfast Essex Phase 3 State Aid Public Consultation received 93 responses submitted via the consultation portal Select Survey. Many comments from the public were making similar or related points. In order to provide feedback to these responses, the Superfast Essex team has created the following answers:

1. Viewing and understanding the maps, and level of information available

A few people indicated they were struggling to view or understand the State Aid maps made available to download as part of the consultation. The Superfast Essex Phase 3 State Aid Public Consultation Document, available on the 'Where, when and how' page of the Superfast Essex website (www.superfastessex.org/where.whenandhow), provided definitions of the colour categories identified on the Basic and Next Generation Access (NGA) maps. The same explanations were also provided in the consultation information. The 'Basic' State Aid map illustrated availability of basic broadband coverage of at least 2Mbps. The 'NGA' State Aid map illustrated availability of broadband coverage of at least 30Mbps. The categories were as follows:

- Black/Grey – coverage available (Grey = at least one operator; Black = more than one operator)
- White – coverage not available;
- Yellow/Cream – under review, coverage claimed by an operator but not confirmed

The white areas on the NGA map illustrated where there is existing poor broadband coverage and further investment required. Our Phase 3 broadband rollout plan will now be designed within the finalised white area boundaries. Please note, we are not expecting to be able to reach all white addresses.

We ensured the file sizes of the documents made available to download were less than 2Mb so that they could be viewed with a basic broadband connection, at home, at work or in one of the Essex Libraries. We appreciate some respondents said they would have preferred to see parishes and roads detailed on the map to identify local areas, however, we did not want to overload the PDF map with too much detail as we were concerned this could make it more difficult to interpret. The intention of the State Aid maps was to provide a high level overview of where coverage does or doesn't exist in the county. We provided the postcode list alongside the downloadable maps to enable individuals to search for more localised information. If parishes, villages or hamlets were in doubt about the colour of their area and unsure about the existing coverage reflected by the maps we hope they would have submitted a comment. We are working to provide an interactive version of the finalised NGA State Aid map on the Superfast Essex website to enable searches at address level on the finalised State Aid coverage data.

2. Requests to be included in Phase 3 and declarations of existing poor connectivity

Thank you to all of you who highlighted you live in an area of poor connectivity or stated a request for superfast broadband to be brought to your village, parish, postcode, or specific address. We checked these requests against supplier information to ensure the areas referenced were highlighted white (and eligible for investment in Phase 3) as appropriate. Please note that our key channel for recording demand for superfast broadband is our Make the Connection survey, which you can find on our website at www.superfastessex.org/registerdemand. As stated in the consultation documentation and on the consultation portal itself, we encouraged everyone to ensure they had registered their demand via this survey by the closing date of the consultation (12th October 2016) as we will take all responses registered up to this date into consideration when planning Phase 3.

However, the survey will remain open and we will still be keen to capture any demand not yet registered to inform future planning stages.

3. Requests to be included in Phase 3 where the interactive coverage map or Next Generation Access (NGA) State Aid map indicates broadband exists or is under review but broadband is not available

The interactive coverage map for Essex which appears on our website at www.superfastessex.org/maps was produced based on information gathered under Open Market Review back in October 2014 from broadband operators about their existing service provision and planned coverage and the Superfast Essex programme's existing rollout plans. Pink areas identified as 'Fibre or wireless broadband available or planned (not part of the Superfast Essex programme)' were identified as already due to be covered by plans to rollout fibre or wireless broadband by the commercial sector as part of this review. Other pink areas identify where work to rollout fibre under the Superfast Essex programme has been completed. If superfast speeds are not achieved, our interactive map will be updated to indicate the area remains eligible for future investment and will turn from pink to blue. However, please note this change will only occur once we receive the next quarterly speed report from BT after work has completed in a postcode.

In order to inform our plans for Phase 3, we carried out an Open Market Review in July 2016 to reassess the market's existing provision and planned coverage and take into account any changes in the information previously provided. We used this information to produce a draft State Aid map of NGA broadband coverage (superfast speeds of at least 30Mbps). This consultation offered a final opportunity for broadband providers, residents and businesses to feedback on the most recent market information to ensure its accuracy.

We are thankful for all feedback received and are reviewing with suppliers the areas brought to our attention. We are aware that some of the claimed existing coverage has not yet been introduced by operators as previously indicated or evidence to prove the coverage exists has not yet been provided. We are continuing to monitor these claimed existing coverage areas and planned coverage areas and they will remain in the 'under review' category in the meantime. We are reasonably confident the broadband coverage will be available in these areas, however until this is determined these areas will not be eligible for investment. Where it is confirmed that superfast broadband is not currently available or planned work has been aborted, these areas will be eligible for investment under Phase 3 of our programme and will be considered for inclusion in the rollout. In a very small number of cases, in locations such as Chappel, Bulmer and Borley, we've been made aware of coverage problems with alternate suppliers such as line of sight issues, in these situations where specific evidence has been provided these properties have been removed from the suppliers claim and made eligible for investment in Phase 3.

4. Requests to be included in Phase 3 because the cabinet identified in your postcode does not serve your address

It is worth bearing in mind that our interactive map is mapped at postcode level at present. If our interactive map indicates work is complete in your postcode and the cabinet structure identified as having been upgraded is not the number cabinet your property is connected to, this will be because you are in what is known as a 'split' postcode meaning there is more than one cabinet serving the addresses in that postcode. Where this is the case, we will be aware that your address has not been able to benefit from the superfast upgrade made in your postcode area and your property therefore remains eligible for investment under the Phase 3 rollout.

Only the cabinets upgraded by our programme are identified on the map. It may be that your cabinet will be mapped to a different split postcode nearby so you could try searching in the surrounding areas on the map in case it is already due for upgrade under our current rollout plan for Phase 2.

5. Long lines and direct exchange connections

Properties which are currently unable to access superfast broadband due to being a long distance from an upgraded cabinet in the street, or connected via a direct exchange connection, will remain eligible for investment as part of the Phase 3 rollout.

6. Requests for 'new build' areas to be included in Phase 3

Premises in new-build and regeneration sites which are less than three years old may not be covered by our programme because the postcodes for these sites will not be recognized by our programme data.

Any 'new' developments built before then and not currently served by any existing or planned broadband infrastructure rollout, which have been recognised as white postcode areas will be eligible for investment as part of Phase 3 and will be considered for inclusion in the rollout.

We are continuing to work with local councils and the Government to seek changes to planning policies which would ensure provision for broadband infrastructure on new sites with 25 or more premises. However these discussions are ongoing and changes to planning policy can take time to enforce. If you are planning to move or have just moved into a new house we would recommend you speak to the developer regarding broadband provision.

7. Requests for more detailed timescales for current planned work

We are aware that residents and businesses are keen to see more detailed timescales for work currently planned under the Superfast Essex programme. We currently provide annual timescales for Phase 2 work being carried out by BT on our interactive map and expect to have shorter timescales available before the end of this year. As soon as this detail is available we will add it to our interactive map.

8. Blank responses

We regret to confirm that there were a few consultation responses which contained no information so we have not been able to consider these as part of our evaluation process and they will not be able to inform our Phase 3 plans.

9. What next?

Now the analysis of the consultation feedback is complete we have finalised our Superfast Essex Phase 3 NGA State Aid map which can be viewed at www.superfastessex.org/where,whenandhow along with the Superfast Essex Phase 3 State Aid Public Consultation Report 2016. We will shortly be starting procurement activity to secure a partner or partners for the delivery of Phase 3. We will be exploring different approaches, including alternative technology solutions and business models. We expect to appoint one or more delivery partners in spring 2017. At that point we will also publish the Phase 3 deployment plan. For more details see section 5 of the Superfast Essex Phase 3 State Aid Public Consultation Report 2016.

If anyone has any further queries for the Superfast Essex programme, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).