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Which? Response to DCMS consultation ‘New Build Developments: Delivering gigabit-capable connections’

Which? welcomes the opportunity to respond to the DCMS consultation on delivering gigabit capable connections for new build developments. We agree with DCMS that to support the Government’s vision of full-fibre connectivity across the UK, it is essential that new homes are built with good quality connectivity already in place rather than having to install new infrastructure after the developments are complete.

Which? agrees that new build properties should have guaranteed access to high quality, reliable, broadband connections. Good quality connectivity is essential to consumers and with broadband increasingly seen as a utility, it is crucial that it is viewed with this level of importance, and prioritised, by property developers.

Which? considers that a clear information failure exists in this market between consumers and developers. When purchasing a new build property, consumers are not always provided with information that enables them to assess the level of connectivity they will receive when they move in before a sale has been agreed. In addition, there are a number of other important considerations for consumers when buying a home (eg price, location, schools). Therefore, Which? supports the Government’s plan to intervene in this market to ensure that all new build developments have gigabit connectivity. We also agree that developers should have the overall responsibility to ensure gigabit connectivity for their developments.

We do not have the necessary information to assess the level of the cost caps suggested. However, it is essential that the developer cap in particular is set at a level which ensures that the majority of developments will be able to receive gigabit connectivity, given the Government’s vision a full fibre future for the UK.

It is essential that the Government now works to pass the legislation required to mandate gigabit-capable networks for all new build developments as soon as possible, so that future new build homeowners have good quality, future-proof connectivity as soon as they move in. Given that there will be a time-lag before the new legislation is passed, the Government should consider whether it can take additional action in the meantime to ensure that consumers have the information they need regarding connectivity when purchasing a new build property. In particular, it could consider including a requirement in current new build

consumer codes (such as the Consumer Code for New Homes) for developers to provide clear and accurate information in relation to connectivity when the property is advertised.

For further information please contact Colum McGuire, External Affairs Manager, Which? At colum.mcguire@which.co.uk

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