Report on the Availability of Fibre Broadband in Helmdon – 28 October 2026

1. This report provides an update on the provision of full-fibre (FTTP) broadband in Helmdon, addressing recent social media concerns and outlining the Parish Council's direct actions. The Council's absolute priority remains securing a universal, open-access broadband solution that serves all 360 dwellings in our civil parish, including the village core, Falcutt, Astwell, and outlying properties. The Council should not endorse solutions that leave parts of the community behind.

2. On 14 October 2026, the Council received formal written confirmation from CityFibre that Helmdon has been entirely removed (de-scoped) from the government-subsidised Project Gigabit Lot 12 contract. CityFibre also confirmed that contractor activity observed in the village on 1 October 2026 was the retrieval of temporary plastic sub-duct installed during early surveys, not the removal of live fibre infrastructure. The Wappenham Road exchange planning application is now defunct.

3. I wrote to Single Mode Networks Ltd, an altnet from North Bucks, following the social media activity. On 12 October 2026, their Managing Director confirmed in writing that their permitted street cabinet hardware has a strict maximum capacity of fewer than 250 connections. Furthermore, they deploy dynamically to profitable clusters rather than committing to a universal parish plan. Because Helmdon has approximately 360 dwellings, this technical limitation physically excludes at least 110 parish properties. The Council should not support or promote a private commercial deployment that does not provide a parish-wide network. That is not to say that Single Mode Networks Ltd is a solution that individuals should not look at; for an individual dwelling in the middle of the village where the occupant is prepared to be committed to a single supplier, it may be an attractive, if unproven, solution. But the parish council should focus on what is best for the whole parish, not just those in a central, commercially attractive, cluster.

4. By contrast, local non-profit provider Tove Valley Broadband (TVB) confirmed on 17 October 2026 that they currently serve 70 properties in Helmdon with a robust 2.5Gbps symmetrical fibre service, with subscription prices remaining locked at £15 per month. Following the government's refusal to provide grant funding for Falcutt, residents there formed a local action group alongside TVB, co-funded the local infrastructure, and successfully connected 100% of Falcutt properties. TVB's core fibre backbone has ample capacity to serve the rest of the village wherever residents are willing to form similar street-level action groups to co-fund the local connection drops.

5. CityFibre claimed that Building Digital UK (BDUK) de-scoped Helmdon because "*commercial coverage has extended further than suppliers had previously indicated.*" However, independent technical data and the official BDUK portal explicitly state there is no commercial gigabit build planned for our postcodes, and TVB has confirmed they made no such claims to BDUK that would trigger de-scoping. Furthermore, the government's Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) officially closed to new community projects on 31 August 2026. This means Helmdon has been left in an administrative funding vacuum by central government, with no active commercial build and no self-help voucher options available.

6. In response, I wrote on 15 and 17 October 2026, to challenge the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and BDUK, demanding they explain this data contradiction. Because the community voucher scheme is now closed, BDUK's only remaining legal mechanism to fulfil its statutory Project Gigabit mandate for our

community is to directly re-allocate Helmdon to an active regional framework contract (such as an Openreach universal build).

7. As we await formal responses from BDUK and West Northamptonshire Council's Digital Infrastructure Team (via NNC), the following next steps are recommended to the Council:

    1. To maintain maximum pressure on central government for a direct framework contract re-allocation covering all 360 dwellings;

    2. To note that due to outstanding correspondence, a further update will be scheduled for the Parish Council meeting on 25 November 2026.

Cllr Danny Moody
Councillor Lead for Fibre Broadband (FTTP)