

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2690

Title: Planning London Datahub – Data visualisation platform

Executive Summary:

The Planning London DataHub collects data on all planning applications made in London, together with commencement and completion data. This now forms a central dataset for London's built environment sector, and is used by both the public sector and the private sector to inform their work and forward planning.

The platform now holds data for over 800,000 planning applications, including all types of development proposals. This dataset has proved valuable for the development community in particular, enabling insight into development at all stages in the planning process. A key remaining opportunity is to unlock access to the data so it can help Londoners to understand and gain insight into development and understand what is proposed and happening around them and potential changes for their local community.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration approves expenditure of £50,000 towards the delivery of a data visualisation platform that better enables Londoners to understand and interrogate data in the Planning London DataHub.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Lucinda Turner

Position: Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration

Signature:



Date: 11/12/2023

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The Planning London DataHub collects and combines three key data sources for the planning system, namely: (i) the data supplied by the applicant as part of the planning application (ii) business process data from planning authorities' back office systems and (iii) the starts and completions data provided annually by boroughs. The collection of data started in November 2020, and it now collects data on c.120,000+ applications each year.
- 1.2 This data service is central to many services that the GLA provides, including being a core data feed for the infrastructure mapping service; demography services and a key source of monitoring data for the London Plan. It provides vital insights for developing the GLA Planning service and our associated work to understand how London is changing. The data also forms an open dataset which is used extensively by the public and private sector.
- 1.3 The GLA Planning team have built a number of dashboards and systems to enable the data to be used by boroughs as well as GLA staff, and it has become a core resource in the delivery and monitoring of services. However, there is potential for the DataHub to be further unlocked for Londoners more widely, by providing a visual resource that would enable people without any data expertise to access and interrogate the data. This will allow communities and any other interested parties to interrogate data at a local level as well as monitor developments as they come through the planning process.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 This decision would progress the building of a platform/website where Londoners will be able to view, explore and interrogate data that is coming from the planning system so that they can better understand development that is happening around them. This in turn should enable more effective community participation in the planning process and consequently more informed decision making.
- 2.2 To achieve this, there are two key areas of work that will need to be undertaken – firstly improving how the data is structured and secondly how users can engage best with data. Whilst this work could in principle be undertaken by the existing supplier, we consider that we can reap greater benefits and also insights for other projects by taking this forward as a specific project. For example a better and more focused understanding of user experience in this space may be transferable for other projects.

Data structure

- 2.3 To enable Londoners to easily use and interrogate the data, the data will need to be presented in a legible and accessible way. In many cases that may mean simplifying some key aspects, increasing consistency and 'aggregating' data (for example, the current database draws decisions from boroughs using bespoke language and descriptions, resulting in their being 7 different ways of saying something has been approved).
- 2.4 Once the data is structured in a more consistent and accessible format, this will need to be fed through a platform that provides some form of simple user interface. The closest examples to this at present in the GLA family are the Planapps platform that enables Londoners to explore the Mayor's role in the planning system or the public interface of the Infrastructure Mapping Application.

User-centred design/ web front end

- 2.5 A key challenge is understanding how Londoners want to see and use the data and any solution will need to be built on user-led design principles. This should result in a fairly simple interface for Londoners to use, although we do not yet know what this might look like.

- 2.6 This platform is likely to receive significant levels of traffic (probably more than other platforms the GLA currently hosts), because the data will be of interest to Londoners, and many other groups e.g. academia as well as directly to the built environment sector.
- 2.7 This project will need to explore and prioritise the needs of particular types of users and deliver an initial solution that meets core needs as a minimal viable product. Further development might be undertaken in the future to address more detailed / bespoke needs.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The GLA is subject to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act (Act) 2010. The Act requires the identification and evaluation of the likely potential impacts, both positive and negative, of GLA decisions on those with protected characteristics.¹ The Mayor is to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may involve, in particular, removing or minimising any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic and taking steps to meet the needs of such people. In certain circumstances compliance with the Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without it.
- 3.2 The production of a public interface has a direct impact on how users engage with the DataHub and the planning system more widely. It will need to be produced in a format that meets or exceeds our published accessibility standards, and be capable of being understood and of use to all users. As such we will need to build testing into our programme to ensure any solution delivers against this.
- 3.3 Careful consideration will need to be given to ensuring diverse representation in the user-led design elements for the public interface and that our user research is carried out with groups that are representative of the population of London. We will ask suppliers to explain how they will achieve this, as well as how they can use the development of digital solutions as a tool to unlock further inclusion (e.g. previous work has resulted in wider investment in inclusivity, for example language tools on PlanApps, a built environment inclusion programme through the AECOM contract and opportunities for career development for under-represented groups through the SHLAA programme). A similar approach will be undertaken here in addition to the core inclusion requirements.

4. Other considerations

Procurement

- 4.1. Procurement will be carried out as an open procurement, in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. An objective in this case is to enable organisations with significant expertise in this space, but that may not have previously engaged with the built environment sector to bid for the work and bring the benefit of their learning.

Risks

- 4.2. The key risks relating to this project include:

¹ These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and (in certain circumstances) marriage and civil partnership.

Risk	Mitigation/Response	Probability	Impact	Overall
Project milestones are not met, or are not met on time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams are in place with appropriate resources to ensure work is kept on track and to budget Given reliance on external partners for some projects, an agile project management approach will be used to allow flexibility 	LOW	MEDIUM	GREEN
Solution not accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on the accessibility of documentation will be issued as part of the tender process and the accessibility of any solutions will be a key deliverable in the programme Check in points with our digital team will be arranged at the start of the programme of delivery 	LOW	HIGH	AMBER
The programme doesn't have the expected benefits / a long term impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A monitoring framework is being put in place to keep track of the impact of the changes to ensure continued delivery and improvement; this includes working with local authorities, community groups and with the development industry. 	LOW	HIGH	AMBER

4.3. The proposals set out in this Assistant Director Decision support a number of key Mayoral strategies and objectives as set out in the table below:

London Recovery Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Green New Deal – Promoting new jobs and opportunities in the green economy High Streets for All – Working with community groups to plan for a diverse, resilient and thriving mix of high street and town centre activities
Environment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring a number of the key policies, including the urban greening score and energy and infrastructure requirements
Housing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting London's diverse housing need and monitoring delivery Well-designed, safe, good quality and environmentally sustainable homes
London Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting Good Growth through building strong and inclusive communities by making related data more accessible Making the best use of land by enabling communities to understand how land that comes forward for development is being used Making the data more accessible around the delivery of the homes Londoners need.
The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting London as a great place to live through the implementation of the London Plan, enabling Londoners to understand the nature of development taking place around them, understand better how it might impact them, and deliver for their needs.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.4 No one involved in the drafting or clearance of this document has any conflicts of interest to declare.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is requested for expenditure of £50,000 towards the delivery of a data visualisation platform that enables Londoners to understand and interrogate data in the planning London DataHub.
- 5.2 This expenditure will be funded from the Digitalisation budget within the Planning and Regeneration Unit's approved budget for 2023-24 financial year.
- 5.3 All expenditure will be incurred by 31 March 2024.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 6.1. The project will be delivered against the outline timetable below:

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	January 2024
Delivery Start Date	January 2024
MVP Delivered	March 2024
Final evaluation start and finish	May 2024

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Peter Kemp has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Corporate Investment Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on 11 December 2023.

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

11/12/2023