

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2742

Title: Elastic Platinum licence for Planning London Datahub

Executive Summary:

The Planning London Datahub collects data on all planning applications made in London, together with commencement and completion data. This forms a central dataset for London's built environment data.

The Datahub is hosted in Elastic Search. This is a platform which itself is open source and free; however the GLA pays for the platinum licence in order to secure important additional functionality (e.g. better connectors enabling the data in the database to be more accessible by a variety of users). The premium licence is currently £19,400 per year and we are seeking authority for expenditure up to £60,000 to enable a three-year licence arrangement (2025 – 2028) to be entered into (including inflation and procurement costs) to enable consistency of service.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration approves expenditure of up to £60,000 towards a three-year Elastic Search Platinum Licence.

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:

20/01/2025

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision Required – Supporting Report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Planning London Datahub operates as the digital counterpart of the planning system for London, collecting data on both the planning process and development proposed (annually we collect data on over 120,000 developments). This data is then used for a variety of purposes including forming an evidence base for planning policy; to model demographic changes; to support the infrastructure mapping application; and it also provides an open dataset used extensively by industry.
- 1.2. The database is hosted by a third party (Venetrix) on behalf of the GLA, the cost of which and its maintenance is subject to a separate future decision. The technology that the database is operated on is “Elastic Search” which is an open-source software which is free to use. The continued use of the paid licence will ensure increased security as well as functionality. The functionality that is key to the current operation of the Datahub is how data is accessed through connectors by other systems and services. The platinum licence enables both a Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) connector and an Open Database Connectivity (ODBC) connector which means that other systems are able to access and report on the data.
- 1.3. In theory, there are alternatives to the current licensing arrangement, including building our own connector and/or extracting the data from the Datahub and publishing it in static formats. However, to set these up would cost significantly more than the licensing arrangements proposed and also be sub-optimal. For example, the connector is used to feed data into a number of other platforms and processes that the GLA operates including:
 - the Development Monitoring Portal
 - LAND4LDN
 - the Infrastructure Mapping Application
 - the annual Starts and Completions reporting to MHCLG on housing numbers for each financial year.
- 1.4. The current contract was agreed in 2021 for a three-year period via a reseller agreement (ICT13960).
- 1.5. The cost for the licence over the three-year period is £57,600. In addition, there will be reseller fees of approximately four per cent (£2,304) which TfL Procurement have confirmed can be used again for this contract. This will run from the 24 January 2025 until the 23 January 2028. The cost of this would be met from the Planning Digitalisation Budget with up to £20,000 earmarked for each year.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. This decision will allow the continuation of the service the GLA currently provides to internal and external parties on data from the Planning London Datahub which supports a range of work and outcomes as highlighted above.

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

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.

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 “protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership status.
- 3.3 Whilst the direct impact of this programme in this regard is limited, it contributes in a positive way – with the availability of development data core to understanding how the city is changing, and how that is impacting different communities, including those with protected characteristics and therefore to helping address equality issues.

4. Other considerations

Risks

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

Risk	Mitigation/Response	Probability	Impact	Overall
Procurement is not completed prior to current contract expiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TfL Procurement have been engaged on this work and have advised to use the reseller framework as it is the quickest route to market. A separate project to build a new website for the PLD has recently started. Whilst not intended to be a complete replacement this could serve as an alternative way of reporting on the data from the system. The current system also comes with an API that provides an alternative method for data to be extracted from the system. This could be an expensive alternative however has additional consultancy from external companies would be need to assist with this. 	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	AMBER

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. The Planning London Datahub is critical in fulfilling the Mayor’s statutory functions in monitoring the impact of the London Plan, providing an evidence base for the Plan and unlocking data of importance to other initiatives including the work of the Infrastructure Co-ordination Service.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.3. 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 £60,000 towards the three-year Platinum Elastic licence to enable the GLA and other organisations to use reporting software with the data from 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 2024-25 financial year.
- 5.3. Expenditure of up to £20,000 per year until will be incurred over the three financial years ending 31 March 2027.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	January 2025
Confirmation licence has been renewed	January 2025

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:

Simon Long has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 20 January 2025.

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

Signature:

Anna Eastcott

Date:

20/01/2025