

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2785

### Title: Planning London Datahub – Data Quality Improvement Programme

#### Executive Summary:

This request is to seek authorisation for the costs of delivering a series of quality improvements to enhance the flow and applicability of the GLA's data on the built environment.

This work programme will include:

- i. Improving how Councils hold and maintain data about planning applications and commencements and completions in their own back-office systems
- ii. Improvements to planning polygon data across the boroughs (this is the geographical basis for planning applications)
- iii. Improvement to the workflow of data through the preparation of guidance documents

This should help to increase the benefits of the Datahub and associated data in the planning of London and better inform the planning of services for Londoners.

#### Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Planning & Regeneration approves a total of £75,000 towards the delivery of the Planning London Datahub Data Quality Improvement Programme during financial years 2025-26 and 2026-27.


#### 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 & Regeneration

**Signature:**



**Date:**

15/09/2025

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. The Greater London Authority Act 1999 places responsibility for strategic planning in London on the Mayor and requires him to produce a strategic spatial strategy for London, and to keep it under review. The Mayor is also able to intervene in the planning process, through his power to review strategically important applications, and call them in to be determined through the application referral process.
- 1.2. In 2019 the GLA undertook the procurement of the Planning London Datahub to replace the London Development Database (LDD), funding the development of an up-to-date, automated data collection and monitoring system for London Plan Data. This was approved under MD2466.
- 1.3. The Delivery Plan – Making Best Use of Land, approved under MD3434, sets out the need for ‘Digital and data improvements to enhance planning and the delivery of homes and jobs’; this includes improvements to the Datahub and associated methods of data collection as a key component.
- 1.4. The GLA Planning team needs to be able to operate as both a strategic policy body and a local planning authority. It therefore requires a range of tools and functionality; and clear, robust business processes to support its functions.
- 1.5. There have been a significant number of benefits of having an open and automated service for the Planning London Datahub:
  - Collection of automated data on a daily basis via Borough Back Office system connectors
  - Provision of data as it is created in the Boroughs back-office systems rather than only when approval has been granted
  - Enabling of data to be provided by the applicants of planning applications through machine-readable formats rather than only through PDF documents
  - Providing a clearer, more transparent picture of what is happening on the ground for Londoners, SMEs, Government and others interested in London’s growth.
- 1.6. The data service now forms a key data service used for many functions of the GLA, including the Infrastructure Co-ordination Service, Demography, Housing Land Supply through LAND4LDN as well as many others. The Data Service also provides an open data service used by many other organisations across London to support service delivery and build resilience.
- 1.7. As with all data services, the Datahub has been on a journey of improvement to increase its impact, but also to improve resilience as the trusted data set for Local Authorities to use and also for industry to rely upon to make important decisions. Most recent changes to the service have included the creation of a new website where Londoners can access and interrogate the data in the Datahub.
- 1.8. Users of the data have highlighted a number of improvements that they would like in order to improve the service and increase its impact. These include:
  - Improved data flows for amended planning applications – which requires data to be managed in local back-office systems in Councils as part of the planning process
  - Increased access to planning polygon (red outline boundaries) data
  - Improved guidance on the completion of planning application forms.

## **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

2.1. The outputs and objectives for the Planning London Datahub system that would be delivered by the Data Improvement Programme include:

- Enhancing the quality of data on amended applications: this will give London Boroughs greater ownership of their development monitoring data, reduce duplication of effort, and also ensure more timely and accurate data updates.
- Completing the Polygon Data Set for all boroughs as a live data service: this is essential, as the planning polygons ('red outline site boundaries') define the geographical parcel of land for each planning application. Consistently collecting this data will improve spatial matching with external datasets and enable more accurate estimates of housing density.
- Improved guidance for completing planning application forms: this will assist borough data officers in using and updating the Planning London Datahub, and help ensure more accurate development data.

## **3. Equality comments**

3.1. The GLA is subject to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality 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. The Mayor is to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and 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. It is considered that the project is unlikely to have a particular impact or difference in impact on any persons with a protected characteristic but we have looked at a number of considerations:

- Day to day, there would be some internal changes to the organisation in the form of business processes but it is not anticipated that this would create any adverse impact on staff with protected characteristics. However we will monitor this and any matters arising would be managed in line with HR policies and the commitments of the GLA to EDI.
- Externally the implementation of this project should help support more transparency in the planning of London, allowing information to be more accessible and searchable.
- Provisions for compliance with the PSED were included in the procurement process.
- The new website will be developed and tested in accordance with GLA accessibility requirements.

## **4. Other considerations**

### Procurement

4.1. We will be working with TfL's procurement team to secure a new contract for consultancy and development services, in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. This will be funded through the GLA's Digitalisation budget.

### Risks

4.2. The key risks relating to this project include:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation/Response</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Overall</b>
The benefits of improved data quality can only be realised when these changes are implemented in local back-office systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of these minor improvements to back-office systems will enable many more borough users (including case officers) access to the PLD data directly in their systems which will drive data quality improvement</li> <li>We can monitor and fix data in the PLD as a workaround but this will lead to delays in when the data is updated and add more GLA staff resource effort to resolve these issues until these changes are implemented</li> </ul>	Medium	Medium	Amber
Local Authorities often have new staff join to help monitor the PLD data and provide annual residential starts and completions data to MHCLG and can struggle knowing what is required of them. Improved documentation and guidance will help to ensure accurate housing data is reported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The GLA Planning Digital and Data team have produced some documentation, but as the move to back-office systems as the source of PLD is undertaken, further documentation of these back-office systems will be important.</li> </ul>	Medium	Low	Green

- 4.3. 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 important data for other initiatives, including the work of the Infrastructure Co-ordination Service.

#### 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 sought for the expenditure of £75,000 towards the delivery of the Planning London Datahub Data Quality Improvement Programme during financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- 5.2 This will be funded from the Digitisation Programme budget in the Planning and Regeneration Unit. The budget was approved as part of the 2025-26 budget. Future year's budgets will still be subject to the annual budget setting process. Any changes in the anticipated profile of spend across the years will be reflected as updates during the budget setting process.
- 5.3 The expected expenditure over the financial years is set out below:
- 2025/26 - £55,000
  - 2026/27 - £20,000
- 5.4 Any further changes to the scope of this project will be subject to further approval via the Authority's decision-making process. All appropriate budget adjustment will be made.

## 6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract [for externally delivered projects]	Sept 2025
Appointment of Supplier for back office system work	Oct 2025
Contract Start Date	Nov 2025
Contract End Date	Oct 2026

### 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 15 September 2025.

✓

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

#### Signature:



#### Date:

15/09/2025