

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2771

Planning London Datahub Pilot with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Programme: Making Best Use of Land

Executive summary:

This Director Decision seeks approval to transfer £120,000 to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). This will enable the GMCA to procure supplier services to implement a pilot project, replicating the Planning London Datahub (PLD) system across the 10 local authorities in the Greater Manchester area. The pilot is funded by a £300,000 grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This is allocated as: £100,000 to the GMCA; and £200,000 to the Greater London Authority (GLA) (including £100,000 for supplier costs).

Due to the GMCA's procurement rules, services intended for the GMCA must be procured directly by the GMCA. This decision therefore seeks approval to transfer £120,000 from the GLA to the GMCA to enable delivery of the pilot. It also seeks approval for expenditure of up to:

- £30,000 to amend the PLD system to accommodate the GMCA authorities
- £50,000 on consultants and temporary staff to support project management, data analysis and research into future improvements to the PLD system.

The pilot will support shared learning; and inform future enhancements to the PLD system. This work has a longer-term aim of enabling a national planning data service.

Decision:

That the Executive Director of Good Growth approves:

- the transfer of £120,000 to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), enabling it to procure supplier services required to deliver the Planning London Datahub (PLD) pilot project
- expenditure of up to £30,000 for AtkinsRéalis to undertake system amendments to the PLD platform to accommodate data from the 10 GMCA local authorities
- expenditure of up to £50,000 on consultants and/or temporary staff to support project management, data analysis, and research into future enhancements to the PLD system.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

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: Philip Graham

Position: Executive Director, Good Growth

Signature: 

Date: 24 November 2025

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Greater London Authority (GLA) Act 1999 places responsibility for strategic planning in London on the Mayor. It requires him to produce a strategic spatial strategy for London; and to keep it under review. The Mayor can also 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 carried out a procurement for the Planning London Datahub (PLD) (which replaced the London Development Database (LDD)). This spend (approved under MD2466) funded the development of an up-to-date, automated data-collection and monitoring system for London planning data.
- 1.3. The GLA Planning team has 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.
- 1.4. There are several benefits of an open and automated service for the PLD:
 - automated data is collected daily via borough back-office system connectors
 - data is provided as it is created in the boroughs' back-office systems, rather than only when approval has been granted
 - those submitting planning applications can provide data through machine-readable formats, rather than through PDF documents only
 - there is a clearer, more transparent picture of what is happening on the ground for Londoners; small and medium-sized enterprises; the government; and others interested in London's growth.
- 1.5. In April 2024, the GLA and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) received a grant of £300,000 through the Strategic Software Project (2025) [No 31/7638] from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This was to fund a pilot project to replicate the PLD system for all 10 local authorities in the Greater Manchester area. (The grant must comply with the requirements of the [Government Communication Service Branding manual](#) in relation to the funded activities.) The intention was to see if the PLD could be replicated in another UK region, with the longer-term aim of enabling this as a national data service for Planning.
- 1.6. The funding for the pilot project was allocated as follows:
 - £200,000 for the GLA
 - £100,000 for the GMCA.
- 1.7. It was originally intended that the GLA would procure three suppliers – Idox, Arcus and the Planning Portal – to develop and configure their systems, to send data from the ten Greater Manchester Authorities to the PLD system. However, the GMCA has since advised that, under its procurement rules, any services intended for the GMCA must be procured directly by them – rather than by the GLA on its behalf. This decision therefore seeks approval to transfer £120,000 from the GLA to the GMCA, so that the GMCA can procure the relevant services directly.
- 1.8. The supplier, AtkinsRéalis (which maintains the PLD) is also required to make adjustments to the system, to cater for the inclusion of the 10 Greater Manchester authorities. As the GLA owns the

PLD's intellectual property, and has a contractual relationship with AtkinsRéalis, it is required to procure its services to make these changes, using the funding provided by MHCLG.

1.9. There have been several challenges since the launch of the PLD – particularly around enabling core data to be updated as applications are amended (because of, e.g., community engagement in the planning process or other factors). For example, there have been changes to numbers of units, floor space and design – meaning that boroughs often require manual intervention to amend core data sets for major schemes. The type of connector used by the Planning Portal limits the flow of data. The Planning Portal has now put in place a JSON connector. This allows applicants to directly update data; and, as part of a culture-change programme with developers and boroughs, to maintain the data in a live format, as part of the planning process. This improvement to the PLD is an intended aspect of the GLA work funded through this programme.

1.10. This decision is therefore to:

- transfer £120,000 to the GMCA, to procure services required for the pilot
- approve spend of £30,000 by the GLA on services required from AtkinsRéalis
- approve spend of up to £50,000 on consultants/temporary staff to assist with project management, data analysis and research into possible future improvements to the functionality of the PLD.

1.11. We have considered best value for money. The Planning Data and Digital team concluded that going out to market to procure new suppliers would be far less cost-effective than continuing with existing ones. These suppliers have delivered very similar work for the GLA as part of the PLD project; seeking separate companies to do this work would be much more expensive, as we would have to create a replica system to achieve this. The services will be procured through a direct award via G-Cloud 14.

1.12. The pilot project was also intended to act as a pathway to further investment by MHCLG, to improve the PLD ecosystem. These improvements will enable better data quality overall; and build on our objective of becoming a leading source of planning data in the industry. These improvements, building on the pilot project, include the following:

- A two-way JSON connector for back-office systems. With this, planning applicants can submit updates to their application data just before the decision is made. This will save local authorities time and resources that would otherwise be spent updating the data themselves. It will also empower developers, and encourage them to take ownership of their data.
- The planning application forms, available on the Planning Portal, will be reviewed and updated.
- There is potential for the national availability of data that provides comparative data sets, showing the performance of delivery in London.
- Better data quality.
- Culture change in the development community, around its relationship to data.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The outputs and objectives for the GMCA Pilot Planning Datahub project include:

- transferring funds to the GMCA, as outlined, enabling them to procure key suppliers and successfully deliver the pilot Planning Datahub project in Greater Manchester
- configuring the PLD system, to cater for the additional data from the ten Greater Manchester authorities

- collating evidence and learning to inform an application for further funding from MHCLG, to build the two-way connectors with back-office system providers; and update planning application forms, to improve data accuracy on application submission.

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 Equality Act 2010 requires the identification and evaluation of the likely potential impacts, both positive and negative, of GLA decisions on those with protected characteristics. The Mayor must 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 Equality Act 2010 may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without it.
- 3.2. The project is considered unlikely to have a particular impact, or difference in impact, on any persons with a protected characteristic. However, we have made several considerations:
- Day to day, there would be some internal changes to the organisation in the form of business processes. However, this is not expected to create any adverse impact on staff with protected characteristics. We will monitor this; any matters that arise will be managed in line with HR policies, and the GLA's commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - Externally, this project should help support more transparency in the PLD, and therefore the planning of London. It will allow information to be more accessible and searchable.
 - Provisions for compliance with the PSED were included in the procurement process.

4. Other considerations

Procurement

- 4.1. We will work with Transport for London's (TfL's) procurement team to secure a new contract for the £30,000 development services from AtkinsRéalis, through a direct award on the G-Cloud 14 framework. The framework permits this approach in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code (the Code).
- 4.2. We will also work with TfL's procurement team to secure the services of an external consultant and/or the Planning Portal for the £50,000 funding. This will also be via a direct award on the G-Cloud 14 framework, which permits this approach.
- 4.3. This shared-learning opportunity will be funded through the grant from MHCLG.

Risks

- 4.4. The key risks relating to this project are outlined in the table below:

Risk	Mitigation/response	Probability	Impact	Overall
The GMCA pilot project cannot proceed until the money is transferred – without it, they lack the funds to procure the supplier.	Transfer £120,000 to the GMCA to proceed with the project.	Low	Medium	Green

Delaying the transfer could require the GMCA to spend more on staff, who are currently supporting the project.	Ensure funding agreement with the GMCA is made promptly, to enable the transfer and begin the procurement. For the time being, the GMCA may be able to carry out procurement for some of the work, with the funding they have already received. This would help the project maintain momentum.	Medium	Low	Green
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- 4.5. Consideration has also been given to the Subsidy Control Act 2022; and whether transferring £120,000 to the GMCA constitutes a subsidy. The Planning Data and Digital team concluded that this is not the case. This is because the suppliers are not getting favourable market terms, and the procurement does not affect competition or trade. As described in section 1.11, quotes from other suppliers would require a complete replacement of the systems already in place. The cost of this would far exceed value of the work being procured.

Conflicts of interest

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

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought to spend £200,000, consisting of:
- a transfer of £120,000 to the GMCA, to pay for supplier costs
 - spend of up to £30,000 for AtkinsRéalis to make amendments to the PLD
 - spend of up to £50,000 to assist with project management, data analysis and research into possible future improvements to the datahub functionality.
- 5.2. The total funding for this project will be met from the MHCLG Modern Planning Software grant that was received 2024-25. As this income was not treated as income in advance at year end, this funding will need to come from reserves. This sits within the Digitalisation programme budget. All spend will take place in 2025-26.
- 5.3. All appropriate budget adjustments will be made.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Executive Director of Good Growth concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers – falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development, and environmental improvement in Greater London. In formulating the proposals, in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the UK
 - consult with appropriate bodies.

- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Executive Director of Good Growth must have due regard to the PSED – namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the director should have particular regard to section 3 of this report.
- 6.3. All procurements of works, services and supplies required for the project must be undertaken in accordance with the Code; and, where applicable, in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 and any associated secondary legislation or guidance.
- 6.4. Officers must liaise with TfL’s procurement and supply chain team, which will determine the appropriate procurement strategy in line with the Code and the Procurement Act 2023. Officers must ensure that suitable contractual documentation is put in place between, and executed by, the chosen service provider(s) and the GLA prior to the commencement of any works, services or supplies.
- 6.5. As set out in paragraph 3 of this report, it is indicated that the contribution of £120,000 to the GMCA amounts to the provision of grant funding and not payment for works/supplies/services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly; transparently; and in accordance with the GLA’s equalities policy, and with the requirements of section 12 of the Code. Furthermore, officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement is put in place between, and executed by, the GLA and the GMCA before:
- any commitment to fund is made
 - any funding is paid to the GMCA.
- 6.6. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 requires that grant funding complies with its subsidy control principles. The officers have set out at paragraph 4.5, above, how the proposed grant complies with those principles.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Transfer of funds to the GMCA	November 2025
Procurement of contract for GMCA/GLA requirements	End of November 2025
Project start	December 2025
Delivery end date	April 2026
Project closure	June 2026

Appendices and supporting papers:

Strategic Software Projects – Grant Determination Letter

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 be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Strategic Programmes

Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES

If YES, which programme/s does this fall within: Making best use of land

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 the 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:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Philip Graham has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

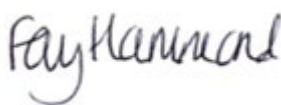
Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 24 November 2025.

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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



Date: 24 November 2025

Signature: