

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD281

Title: London Development Capacity Model - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) system upgrade

Executive Summary:

Approval is sought from the Assistant Director to spend up to £50,000 on the upgrade and enhancement of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) database to produce a multi-functional London Development Capacity Model (LDCM), while retaining the core functionality to calculate the housing targets for future iterations of the London Plan. The key objectives will be:

- To open it up so it can do more than a one-off snapshot, allowing multiple “projects”. These could be either London-wide or within other user-defined geographic areas.
- Custom upload of GIS boundaries to allow new constraint layers to be used in future SHLAAs without the need for a software developer and for project-specific spatial layers to be uploaded
- Editable constraint levels on all spatial layers
- Allocation of sites to uses other than residential and complex evaluation of mixed use sites
- Addition of specific capacity for specialist housing

The resulting system will be capable of conducting integrated land availability assessments that cover additional land uses required to support housing growth. It can also be made available to the London Planning Authority’s (LPAs) to allow the ongoing management of their brownfield sites databases and to promote a consistent methodology for land availability assessments across London.

Decision:

The Assistant Director approves expenditure up to £50,000 from the Planning Unit’s 2014-15 London Plan budget to produce a Development Capacity Modelling System with the functionality described in the project specification.

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: Stewart Murray

Position: Assistant Director Planning

Signature:

Date:

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Carrying out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a statutory duty set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Para 159 requires local planning authorities to:
 - prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period.
- 1.2. The GLA has developed a spatial database to help assess the amount of available land for housing across London. Originally devised as the London Housing Capacity Study System (LHCSS) for the 2004 London Plan, it has been successfully enhanced and updated for each major revision to the London Plan. The system holds an extensive database of potential housing sites across London. A housing density is assumed for each site based on the location and the accessibility to public transport based on the London Plan's SRQ matrix. The sites are also compared with spatial data to identify potential development constraints on development. The sites are then assessed by the relevant planning authority who refine the initial assumptions on density and probability of being developed for housing. This methodology has allowed the GLA to produce robust assumptions about land availability to inform the housing benchmarks in the London Plan that have been accepted by the boroughs and stood up to the scrutiny of an Examination in Public.
- 1.3. The latest version of the LHCSS/SHLAA system was developed for the Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) by OpenIQ following a tender process in 2012 (MD1050). This project made the system NPPF compliant, refined the calculations, improved the scenario testing, incorporated improved mapping technology and, in line with the objectives of the GLA's Technology Group, changed the underlying database architecture from Oracle to the open-source PostgreSQL platform. Due to the significant risk that any delays in the development of the SHLAA system could prevent the delivery of FALP, it was decided to use the template of the previous LHCSS and develop a system specifically to produce the housing capacity estimates required for this iteration of the Plan. The system was delivered successfully and on time, providing the evidence needed to support the housing targets used in FALP.
- 1.4. With a full review of the Plan required, a new SHLAA will need to be undertaken. The current system is already on an open source database platform and is using up to date technology, it is therefore viable to re-use an enhanced version of the existing system rather than building a new one. By initiating the project now and building in the flexibility to add and remove spatial layers, define and adjust the constraint calculations on a project by project basis and increase the flexibility of the scenario testing module, the SHLAA system can be made ready for the next review of the plan without the normal risk associated with carrying out the development of the SHLAA system in parallel with the writing of the plan.
- 1.5. As implied by the name, the SHLAA system focusses on housing sites. Sites can be excluded if they have been identified for a non-residential use, but the land requirement or capacity for these uses does not form part of the calculations. In the section entitled 'Using a proportionate evidence base', Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states:

Local planning authorities should use (their) evidence base to assess:

- the needs for land or floorspace for economic development, including both the quantitative and qualitative needs for all foreseeable types of economic activity over the plan period, including for retail and leisure development;
 - the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs. Reviews of land available for economic development should be undertaken at the same time as, or combined with, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and should include a reappraisal of the suitability of previously allocated land;
- 1.6. In the past the assessment of land for economic development has been carried out at the same time as, but not combined with, the SHLAA. It would therefore improve compliance with the NPPF if other uses could be considered and evaluated in the same way as housing within the LDCM system.
- 1.7. Discussion with the boroughs through the network of London Development Database users has shown that they would benefit from having access to the LDCM, both to help keep track of their housing sites and, significantly, to help identify new sites and show how they can bridge the gap between the 42,000 homes identified in the borough targets and the 49,000 London-wide target. New planning authorities, such as the Old Oak and Park Royal Mayoral Development Corporation, will also need to identify housing capacity within their area and could make use of the LDCM. If London planning authorities are using the LDCM on an ongoing basis they will be able to keep their sites database up to date, significantly reducing the risk of project delays while producing London-wide housing targets for future versions of the London Plan.
- 1.8. We therefore propose to employ consultants to make alterations to the existing system as set out in the final project specification. The broad goals can be defined as follows:
- To open it up so it can do more than a one-off snapshot, allowing different 'projects' to be initiated. These could be either London-wide or within user-defined geographic areas and have their own rules and constraints
 - Allow users to upload GIS boundaries and the flexibility to carry out calculations using the values associated with these spatial layers
 - The facility to edit the values associated with the site constraints identified by these spatial layers as well as those used for scenario testing
 - Allow sites and areas within them to be allocated to uses other than residential and the complex evaluation of multiple land uses, facilitating a more holistic approach to development modelling than is currently possible
 - Addition of specific capacity modelling for specialist housing
 - The facility to transfer polygons from one 'project' to another within the system
 - The facility to compare and track site boundaries with those on planning information systems such as PAWS and the LDD on an ongoing basis. This will help the GLA move towards an integrated planning information platform for developable land within London.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The objective is to produce an LDCM system capable of re-use for a London-wide SHLAA using the current methodology, as well as for other projects such as comprehensive integrated land availability assessments, planning authority level SHLAAs, monitoring brownfield sites and borough housing trajectories.
- 2.2. The expected outcome is a fully functioning web-based database system capable of producing robust development capacity estimates across a range of land uses using different spatial

boundaries. It will be capable of modelling many different scenarios for comparison with each other and for use in a more diverse range of projects than those produced by the current SHLAA.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The SHLAA forms part of the London Plan process which is subject to a full IIA and plays an essential role in identifying housing sites to meet the needs of London's diverse population. The addition of specialist housing, such as housing for older people, to the scope of the SHLAA system will significantly improve the potential for the system to consider the needs specific groups within the community. The integration of additional land uses into the assessment will ensure that the supply of land required to provide the support services required by Londoners can be factored into density assumptions for the first time.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. The housing capacity estimates produced by the SHLAA form an essential element of the London Plan. The decision to initiate this project prior to the date of the next review of the plan being identified is intended to reduce the risk associated with developing the system in parallel with conducting a full review of the plan. The ability for boroughs to use the system outside of the normal SHLAA process will allow them to keep an up to date register of potential development sites, reducing the time required to prepare for a SHLAA.
- 4.2. By allowing the system to consider uses besides residential, the system will be more closely aligned with the requirements of the NPPF and less vulnerable to any potential legal challenge over the capacity modelling process.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Assistant Director's approval is being sought for expenditure up to £50,000 to produce a Development Capacity Modelling System with the functionality described in the project spec and detailed in section 1 and 2 above. Approval is also sought to identify and appoint a consultant to carry out the work.
- 5.2. This will be funded from Planning Unit's 2014-15 London Plan budget. As the costs relate to 2015-16 there will be a need to request a budget carry forward from 2014-15 to 2015-16, the approval for which is subject to the GLA's year-end process. It should be noted that if the budget carry forward is not approved then expenditure will need to be contained within London Plan 2015-16 budget.
- 5.3. As this work relates to a consultancy contract, officers have to ensure that the requirements of the Authority's Contracts & Funding Code are adhered to and that the requirements relating to consultancy services within the Authority's Financial Regulations and Expenses & Benefits Framework are also adhered to.
- 5.4. All required budget adjustments will be completed.
- 5.5. Any changes to this proposal including budgetary implications will be subject to further approval via the Authority's Decision Making Process.
- 5.6. Technology Group and the Planning Unit within Development, Enterprise and Environment will be jointly responsible for managing this contract and work.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract [for externally delivered projects]	May 2015
Announcement [if applicable]	
Delivery Start Date [for project proposals]	Summer 2015
Delivery End Date [for project proposals]	Winter 2015
Project Closure: [for project proposals]	March 2016

Appendices and supporting papers:

Draft version of the project specification document.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) 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 approval or on the defer date.

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

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be 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:

Jonathan Brooker has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that the Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal as required, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

HEAD OF GOVERNANCE AND RESILIENCE:

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

Signature:

Date: