

**DIRECTOR DECISION – DD 165**

**Title: Vu.City Licence Renewal**

**Executive summary**

Since October 2020, OPDC has used the Vu.City 3D urban modelling digital platform to inform the production of planning guidance, inform the development management process and support public consultation exercises. It is an invaluable tool in considering the appropriateness of policy and development proposals in relation to heights and massing and in presenting proposals to internal and external stakeholders.

Vu.City is used by the majority of London boroughs and is used by many private built environment sector organisations. This enables the effective and efficient sharing of information to support planning processes.

This decision seeks the continued use of Vu.City by renewing the current licence for calendar two years. The annual cost remains the same as the previous two years but the total value being approved here includes an inflationary estimate not recognised in prior years.

**Decision**

The Director of Planning approves:

- i. Expenditure of £12,000 from the Planning Directorate budget for the renewal of the Vu.City 3D urban modelling digital platform for two calendar years from 2022 to 2024.

**Authorising Director**

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and has my approval.

**Signature:**



**Date:** 22.11.22

## **PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

### **1. Background and context**

- 1.1 Since October 2020, OPDC has used the Vu.City 3D urban modelling digital platform to inform the production of planning guidance, inform the development management process and support public consultation exercises. Vu.City is an invaluable tool in considering the appropriateness of policy and development proposals in relation to heights and massing and in presenting proposals to internal and external stakeholders.
- 1.2 Vu.City is used by the majority of London boroughs and is used by many private built environment sector organisations. This enables the effective and efficient sharing of information to support planning processes.
- 1.3 Continued use of Vu.City will:
  - assist officers in thoroughly and efficiently assessing emerging development proposals in the preparation of planning policy, pre application discussions and for planning applications.
  - allow for development proposals to be more effectively presented to ODPC's Planning Committee, Board and other stakeholders as appropriate.
  - support OPDC in producing 3D visualisations of the future regeneration of the area by allowing OPDC to be the "host" the master 3D model of the area.
  - support officers in developing planning guidance for appropriate heights and massing within the OPDC area.
  - support more effective community engagement on planning policy and planning applications through accessible visualisations.
- 1.4 This decision seeks the continued use of Vu.City by renewing the current licence for two years. The annual cost is expected to remain the same as the previous two years at £5,000 per year; however, officers have included an uplift of £1,000 for each of the forthcoming two years sought for approval to account for any potential increase in costs relating to inflation.
- 1.5 Two previous Delegated Authority Records record the procurement and renewal of the Vu.City licence:
  - DAR 217 for £5,000 from the 2020/21 Planning Policy budget.
  - DAR 299 for £5,000 to be split between 2021/22 and 2022/23 budget.
- 1.6 The total cost for the previous two years and the next two years would be £22,000.

### **2. The proposal and how it will be delivered**

- 2.1 The Vu.City licence will be initially renewed for a 12-month period from 20 October 2022 and subsequently renewed for a second 12-month period from 20 October 2023. This Decision is partially retrospective accounting for the time lapsed between 20 October 2022 and procurement of services in December 2022.

- 2.2 The licence enables OPDC to access and utilise a web-based 3D urban modelling digital platform for the whole of London to inform the planning of the OPDC area, deliver a high-quality built environment and secure benefits for local communities.
- 2.3 The licence allows for 10 individual “user” licences for OPDC staff members. All staff can be provided with access to the platform, with individual user licences allocated and unallocated as necessary. The licence secures ongoing direct support from Vu.City and training of new officers in its use.
- 2.4 The licence will be procured via Transport for London procurement services making use of the Reseller and Associated Services Framework.

### **3. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 3.1 The objective is to continue to make use of the Vu.City model to benefit various workstreams across the planning and development directorates.
- 3.2 The outcomes will be a high quality and coordinated planning and development process supporting the delivery of a high-quality built environment and coordination with internal and external stakeholders that will ultimately benefit local communities.
- 3.3 Outputs include:
  - views assessments and visuals to support preparation of planning guidance, avoiding the need to procure consultancy services.
  - modelling to inform pre-app discussions, helping to more thoroughly assess the impact of proposals at an early stage.
  - demonstrating impact of proposed schemes in greater context at planning committee meetings.
  - supporting work of the delivery directorate in producing 3D visuals to demonstrate the development opportunity at Old Oak and Park Royal.
- 3.4 Officers reviewed a range of 3D modelling providers considering functionality, cost and usability. Vu.City is considered to offer the best value and will be procured via Transport for London’s Reseller and Associated Services Framework.
- 3.5 It is expected that the continued use of the platform will continue to provide the above benefits to OPDC. In addition, the platform will help officers to respond positively to continued digitalisation of the planning system.

### **4. Strategic fit**

- 4.1 Continued use of Vu.City will help inform a number of existing and future OPDC workstreams including:
  - delivering policies SP9, D3, D4 and D5 regarding delivering a high-quality built environment with appropriate ranges of building heights.
  - informing the development of future planning guidance relating to building heights and massing.

- informing the development management process, enabling officers to consider the appropriateness of the heights, massing and visual impacts of development proposals.
- supporting the implementation of OPDC's Statement of Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy by providing accessible visualisations.

## **5. Project governance and assurance**

- 5.1 The Principal Planning Officer will be responsible for contract management. The Senior Planning Officer will be responsible for the daily management and managing of training for use of the VuCity model. The Senior Planning Officer will report to the Principal Planning Officer and escalate any issues.

### *Risks and issues*

- 5.2 If the licence is not renewed, it will compromise OPDC's ability to function efficiently as a local planning authority and to present guidance and development proposals meaningfully to stakeholders. This could result in:
- delays to the development management process and delivery of new development including affordable homes.
  - planning guidance and supporting studies that lack key building heights, massing and amenity information.
  - the inability for OPDC to share heights and massing data with stakeholders and partners.
  - difficulties for members of the public and interested parties understanding proposed developments and planning guidance.

## **6. Equality comments**

- 6.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, OPDC must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.<sup>12</sup><sup>[OBJ]</sup>
- 6.2 Continuing use of the Vu.City model will enable the production of visualisations to demonstrate how the future development could impact on its context. This will be critically important for public consultants to enable people to engage with and

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<sup>1</sup> The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Fulfilling this duty involves having due regard to: the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic or one that is connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a Decision is taken in the exercise of the OPDC's functions.

provide their views on proposals. Although it is a digital model, the visualisations would be provided in printed media as required. This will provide access for those without internet.

- 6.3 This will benefit everyone, regardless of abilities, needs, genders, beliefs, and identities. This will help contribute to delivering the key actions within OPDC's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and will ensure that London is a fairer, more inclusive, and more equal city.

## **7. Other considerations**

### *Obtaining value for money*

- 7.1 Officers are confident that the continued renewal of the existing licence with Vu.City presents Planning officers with good value for money. This is based on the extensive use of modelling and platform to date, existing training of officers to utilise the platform and providing a consistent approach for sharing and presenting built environmental data and visualisations in the public, private and community sectors.

## **8. Conflicts of interest**

- 8.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Form, or its substantive proposal, has any conflict of interest.

## **9. Financial comments**

- 9.1 Taking the starting-point of the contract to be mid-October 2022, total expenditure of £12,000 (including inflationary estimates) over two calendar years to be apportioned between financial years as follows:

<b>Date range</b>	<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Calculation</b>	<b>Value</b>
Mid-October 2022 – end March 2023	2022/23	Year 1 renewal: £6,000 x (5.5/12 months)	£2,750
Whole FY	2023/24	Remainder of year 1, then 5.5 months of year 2 renewal	£6,000
April 2024 – mid-October 2024	2024/25	Remainder of year 2: £6,000 x (6.5/12 months)	£3,250
			<b>£12,000</b>

This disregards the value of licence costs already incurred this year through the preceding licence, as these have already been approved.

- 9.2 Any further expenditure, including any additional inflationary cost rises in respect of this Decision, are subject to the Corporation's decision-making process.

## 10. Summary timeline

Activity	Date
Procurement commenced	Nov 2022
Procurement of contract award	Early Dec 2022
Announcement	Early Dec 2022
Delivery start date	Mid Dec 2022

## Appendices

- None

## Other supporting papers

- DAR 217
- DAR 299

### PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

#### Part 1 – Deferral

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **No**

The deferral is until: N/A

This is because: N/A

#### Part 2 – Confidential information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: **No**

### DECLARATIONS

**Drafting officer:** Peter Farnham has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirms that:



**Advice:** The Finance team have commented on the proposal.



**CONFIRMATIONS**

**Section 106 funding:** N/A

**SMT review:** This Decision was circulated to the **Senior Management Team** for review on Monday 21 November 2022

**Chief Finance Officer**

Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 23.11.22