



## Digital tools for Plan Making and Development Management

14/06/2022

- **A single web-based platform which provides visibility of local plans across the whole of England will allow planners to make better planning decisions as they can access information and compare approaches.** But funding and legal issues need to be resolved before it becomes a reality. Planners often find it difficult to navigate the different web packages where information is made available. The Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill acknowledges that it will need money, and resources. We have a really big task in front of us to complete this transition.
- **Birmingham City Council have created a platform that identifies the parcels of land in Birmingham which are potentially suitable for development.** It also provides an audit trail of any changes that are made to the site and allows people to submit their site boundaries directly onto a map that puts the site straight into the Placemaker tool. The tool forms an integral part of Birmingham's evidence base as they progress through the plan making process, showing that they have left 'no stone unturned' to establish their development capacity.
- **The private sector are also using digital tools in the development process.** Placemake.io draws data in from a large range of sources, allowing you to grade the importance of each source to arrive at a scoring system to guide development. It illustrates the wealth of data which is publicly available and can be used to pinpoint where development potential is likely to be strongest in an area. It can also work at different scales and shows high variation at even the very local scale, for example the area around rail stations. These tools can help planners to understand the drivers and decisions made by the private sector and provide a platform for discussion and understanding about where future development might work best.
- **Chesterfield borough council have transformed a number of aspects of their call for sites process through the use of an interactive online platform.** This has shifted notification of sites predominantly by agents and landowners to a much greater number by the public, with a much wider variety of land uses proposed and in a greater variety of locations. It has hugely reduced the bureaucracy of the process for staff with online assessment of submissions and filtering options, leading to plans for further digitisation of more planning processes in future.
- **There are a number of different ways to test capacity** – using the existing plans gathered from similar schemes can be useful to form tools for quick analysis such as proposed with Blocktype. These approaches use the power of technology for holding and processing data, allowing people to then adapt the results as needed for specific sites to give indications of possible capacity.
- **Using digital tools for engagement has allowed a wider range of the public to contribute.** It also allows for different types of input, for example adding in features to a map, including spatial as well as verbal contributions. Combined with in-person



methods of engagement, this has opened up huge potential for a much richer and more useful engagement, reaching more diverse groups.

- **The Digital Planning Programme at DLUHC is enabling council collaboration on the open digital planning services of the future.** Two key areas of work are RIPA (Reducing Invalid Planning Applications) and BOPS (Back-Office Planning System) with several LPAs participating and collaborating. Regular monthly updates on this work are provided, showing how the tools are developing presented by the local authority teams – see [here](#) to access these.
- **Practical steps to get started** including investigating what others have done; looking at what is coming up and think how digital tools could help; looking internally at what skills you could gather inside and across different council teams and finally engage with suppliers, finding out how their capabilities could align with your approach.

**NOTE:** The **Blocktype** team are looking for people and organisations to join their testing group to help shape the product. (You get to use the tool for free!). Email [info@blocktype.co.uk](mailto:info@blocktype.co.uk) if you're interested.

## Speakers:

**Amy Pidwill**, Senior Safety Strategy Manager, TfL

**Nick O'Donnell**, Assistant Director of Traffic and Engineering, LB Richmond & Wandsworth

**Sam Dillon**, Sustrans

**Jess Marston**, LB Lambeth

**Simon Bradbury**, City of London

**Ross Phillips**, Cross River Partnership

**Julie Plichon**, LB Islington

**Carla Leowe**, Westminster City Council

**Robert Nicolas**, LB Richmond & Wandsworth

**Matthew Avery**, Director of Research, Thatcham