

## Appendix:

### Local Government Open Data Breakthrough Projects Evaluation Report

<b>Project title:</b>	Countywide Planning Open Data
<b>Lead organisation:</b>	Surrey GIS Forum c/o Guildford Borough Council
<b>Submission date:</b>	5 September 2014
<b>Type of project:</b>	Open Data publication including Open Source aggregator, API, Wiki and Data Schema development
<b>Total grant:</b>	£25,000 (reduced to £19,750)

#### Summary of the project

This project set out to create a consolidated feed of planning application information across Surrey, regardless of originating authority, computer systems or administrative boundaries. Universal XML feeds were created from individual authorities and aggregated by our open-source server application which was made freely available via [GitHub](#). An API was written to allow various selections to be performed on the dataset and instructions hosted on our [Wiki](#) pages.

#### Challenge/opportunity:

Before this project there was no easy, consistent method of accessing planning application information across Surrey. Planning information has been proven to be a highly popular topic from online enquirers, particularly Surrey residents, businesses and Local Economic Partnerships. Organisations like Surrey County Council formerly had no way to present planning information on their website other than to signpost to 11 separate district council websites. This project allows them to embed a dynamic, mobile responsive map onto their website showing a live picture of planning information across the entire county. The same can be said of any website wanting to host our web map. ODUG / LGA have recently launched the Open Data Incentive Scheme, acknowledging the public value placed on planning information. Outputs of this will be natively compatible with our planning hub, allowing the potential to reveal information beyond Surrey, irrespective of government boundaries.

#### Data published and uses:

- 4 live planning open data feeds (Mole Valley, Surrey Heath, Spelthorne, Waverley) showing over 2000 current planning applications across Surrey.
- Each of the 2000 data items / markers reveals standardised basic information about the planning application and allows hyperlinking to additional information such as scanned documents.
- All feeds compliant with national schema therefore fully compatible, across borders and regardless of source planning systems.
- 3 more Surrey feeds imminent as well as selection of nearby councils (Windsor & Maidenhead, Horsham) registered to produce compatible planning open data feeds via ODUG/LGA Incentive Scheme.
- Wiki pages (<http://hub-dev.astun.co.uk/>) produced, explaining API functions and embeddable 'Leaflet' (responsive) map. Example code shown. Freely available for application on any website. Embeddable map is gesture-responsive and offers enriched, nationwide mapping thanks to use of Open Street Map.

- Planning Hub due to be demonstrated to Surrey Chief Information Technology Officers (SCITO) and Surrey Web Managers in October 2014.
- Most publishing authorities are also registered with LGA Incentive Scheme and encouraged to promote open data feeds on ESD Toolkit, Data.gov.uk, Surrey-i and their own websites.
- Anticipated future promotion to local developer communities and contacts as well as GIS and Open Data peer groups.

### **Approach to publishing data**

- Individual, machine-readable data feeds were created from publishing authorities for consolidation by our server application.
- XML was chosen as the ideal publishing format prior to the data's aggregation on our Hub server. XML feeds were relatively easily created by authorities, chiefly due to the same GIS / Web systems being used across Surrey councils.
- Our web API retrieves data in GeoJSON format and allows for optional filtering and sorting of data by authority, status, date, etc.
- Our data schema was modelled on the [national planning open data schema](#) hosted by ESD and devised by Hampshire County Council. This ensures future integration with the Hants data and other authorities nationwide.
- Our system is currently hosted on Amazon Web Services and therefore benefits from exemplary resilience. The same level of service will be available once it is migrated into the Surrey Data Centre (due as part of GuildfordBC's hardware migration).
- Promotion of the service will begin shortly with initial demonstrations planned for the Surrey Web Managers and Surrey Chief Information Technology Officers. Public promotion will follow, likely timed to coincide with the LGA/ODUG incentive scheme publications.

### **Benefits and impact**

Prior to this project there was no way to display or search an aggregated dataset of planning applications, whether a member of the public or council officer. This is now possible in a consistent, simple way that can be replicated for free on any website, including all Surrey local authorities. An embeddable, device-responsive map can be deployed and valuable API calls made of the united planning dataset.

The project currently has 4 publishing authorities and another 3 are expected imminently. We intend to produce the remaining 4 feeds by sharing experiences and methodologies. It is likely that once this is complete we will embark on a more extensive advertising campaign.

All developed code is re-usable and our methodologies can be shared and applied to other sites. Source code is available on [GitHub](#). Hosting of the system is secured until 2018 and further periodic development is expected to improve and enhance the service during this time.

The project did not run without problems, most notable of which was reluctance from GeoPlace and Ordnance Survey to permit publication of UPRNs and Easting/Northing coordinates. We were also unable to occupy server space within the new Surrey Data Centre, due to high level procrastination as to the management of tenant hardware within the centre. Both of these impacted on the timescale of the project.

**Further information:**

<http://hub-dev.astun.co.uk/> (soon to be redirected from its own Surrey Digital Services .gov domain (application pending))

Example individual authority XML feed (pre-aggregation):

[http://maps.molevalley.gov.uk/GetData.aspx?type=data&ds=planning\\_hub\\_feed&requesttype=xsl&xsl=xml\atraw.xsl](http://maps.molevalley.gov.uk/GetData.aspx?type=data&ds=planning_hub_feed&requesttype=xsl&xsl=xml\atraw.xsl)