

DIGITAL PLANNING

THE PLANNING SYSTEM IS CHANGING (?)

PRESENTATION TO THE HBF PLANNING CONFERENCE



PROCESSUSTECH



THE CURRENT TECH STACK – SINCE 2005

The Local Government Lock in.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

LEGAL SECTOR COMPARISON

79%

OF LEGAL PROFESSIONALS USING AI, 2025

Up from just 19% in 2023 — one of the fastest technology shifts the profession has seen. Clio Legal Trends Report.

+9.7% law firm tech budgets in 2025, the fastest real growth on record; KM spend up 10.5%.

34% → 52% AI implementation in corporate legal departments, in a single year.

240 hrs estimated annual saving per lawyer — about \$27k less hourly billing each.

Governance lags the tools: fewer than half of firms train staff on responsible AI use.

SOURCES: CLIO LEGAL TRENDS REPORT 2025; THOMSON REUTERS / GEORGETOWN LAW, 2026 STATE OF THE US LEGAL MARKET; INDUSTRY SURVEYS 2025–26

PROCESSUSTECH • DRAFT FOR REVIEW

Momentum inside government – Open Digital Planning

The MHCLG Digital Planning Programme is the engine room of public-sector reform — funding councils directly and building the shared standards, data platforms and open-source tools the whole sector relies on.

~200

councils now in the Open Digital Planning network (from a handful of pilots in 2018)

122

LPAs publishing standardised data to the Planning Data Platform — 70 joined in 2025 alone

65

PropTech pilots delivered across 47 LPAs — the largest UK Government PropTech programme

£50k–£100k

per-council grants through Digital Planning Improvement Fund rounds (46 and 43 LPAs respectively)

ODP NETWORK MEMBERSHIP — LPAs, BY YEAR

Year	Membership (LPAs)
2018 (pilot)	3
2024	107
2025	200

Narrative Questions: *a network that grew from 3 founding councils to ~200 in seven years initially as a group of organisations to test ideas and concepts, and then a community to create growth and momentum without the support of government. The financial assistance has realistically been the driving force for membership and PAS is now really in the driving seat for defining its future.*

It originally intended that this group would lead on the adoption of software that MHCLG was funding including BOPS and plan X. Whilst the only organisations to adopt the software have been members, wide scan adoption has not been noted mainly because membership itself has not driven digital innovation, but also this clarity about its future.

Source: mhclgdigital.blog.gov.uk (“year in review”, “transforming England’s planning system”); localdigital.gov.uk; opendigitalplanning.org

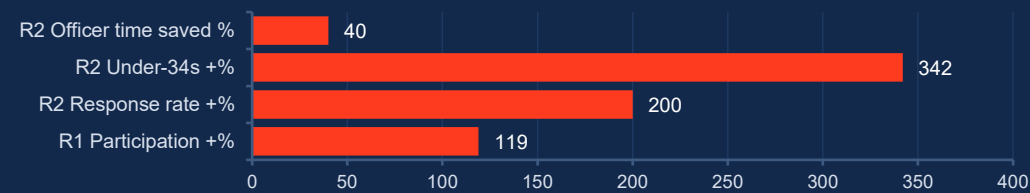
What it has produced

Run since 2021, the Fund pairs councils with private-sector technology suppliers to pilot tools that improve engagement, decision-making and plan-making — then measures the results.

MEASURED OUTCOMES

- Round 1:** +119% citizen participation in consultations; ~280 officer-hours saved
- Round 2:** up to 3× response rates vs. prior consultations; −40% officer time; +342% respondents under 34
- Round 3:** £3.2m to 15 council-led projects across 27 LPAs; AI & automation to fast-track consultation responses
- Round 4:** record number of submissions; focus shifted to land assessment, viability and 3D visualisation for plan-making
- Round 5:** PropTech Innovation Challenge — 12 teams from 84 bids on land data, small-site viability & infrastructure

HEADLINE IMPACT BY METRIC (%)



Note: all bars show magnitude of change; Round 2's 3× response-rate uplift is shown as +200%.

PRODUCTS THAT HAVE SCALED FROM PILOTS

- 3D city visualisation** — platforms in the style of VU.CITY, used by committees to assess massing, scale and height of major schemes
- Citizen engagement tools** — such as Commonplace and Give My View, embedded into consultation and plan-making
- AI validation ‘copilots’** — such as Valon, layered onto incumbent back-office systems
- Constraint & viability tools** — used to accelerate land assessment ahead of allocation in local plans

Note:: The Fund behaves like a public-sector venture studio — early rounds run broad engagement experiments (R1–R3), then narrow toward harder, higher-value problems: viability, 3D and land assessment (R4), and scaling the market itself (R5). That trajectory tracks the sector's real bottleneck: speed of allocation and decision-making, not citizen awareness.

Round 6 – The funded submissions are just about to be announced, but the focus is on Delivery and S106 processes.

Source: MHCLG Digital blog — “allocation of funding for council-led initiatives” (Feb 2024) and “year in review” (Dec 2024) — mhclgdigital.blog.gov.uk

Government interventions changing the dial

01

National Data Standards

Common schemas — including the 1App application schema and ODP data standards — so software from different suppliers can finally interoperate.

02

Planning Data Platform

Central platform onto which LPAs publish standardised datasets; 122 LPAs now publishing, with 70 joining in 2025 alone.

03

Local Plan Data Standards

Moving local plans from static PDF documents to structured, map-based data, enabling automated checking of proposals against policy.

04

“Extract” and “Align”(Google / DSIT iAI)

AI tool built with the Incubator for Artificial Intelligence to digitise legacy planning maps and documents in minutes, not hours and Align is the program to deliver augmented decisions.

The connecting thread: the Open Digital Planning network turns these interventions from top-down mandates into a shared, peer-supported transformation, with the PropTech Innovation Fund and Digital Planning Improvement Fund as the financial levers driving adoption.

Source: mhcldigital.blog.gov.uk — “A year of transforming England’s planning system” (Dec 2025); opendigitalplanning.org

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

TO GET THE CONVERSATION MOVING

Provide the Baseline of Services – For LPAs to excel will need local decisions around investment – or a different ecosystem

Data – the Real AI Question

- Resident Expectations are increasing
- The need for Evidence Based Decision Making
- Competition of the AI models
- Planners are likely to be stuck in the middle
- Development will Stall Again
- Keyboard Warriors

CALLOUT

“Without data, you're just another person with an opinion.”

W. Edwards – Deming

WHO OWNS THE DATA.....

£72bn

estimated size of the UK PropTech/land-data sector by 2032

Today, almost all of this value sits with private data companies — not the sector generating the underlying data.



A single planning register



FUTURE BUILDS APP

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Real Examples that you can use now - SECTOR COMPARISON

Planda Portal

AI Submission Portal

Enables you to validate your application (to national standards) as you submit.

Join up with any workflow platforms you operate internally.

- Less than 35% of applications invalid on receipt

UK Planning Gateway

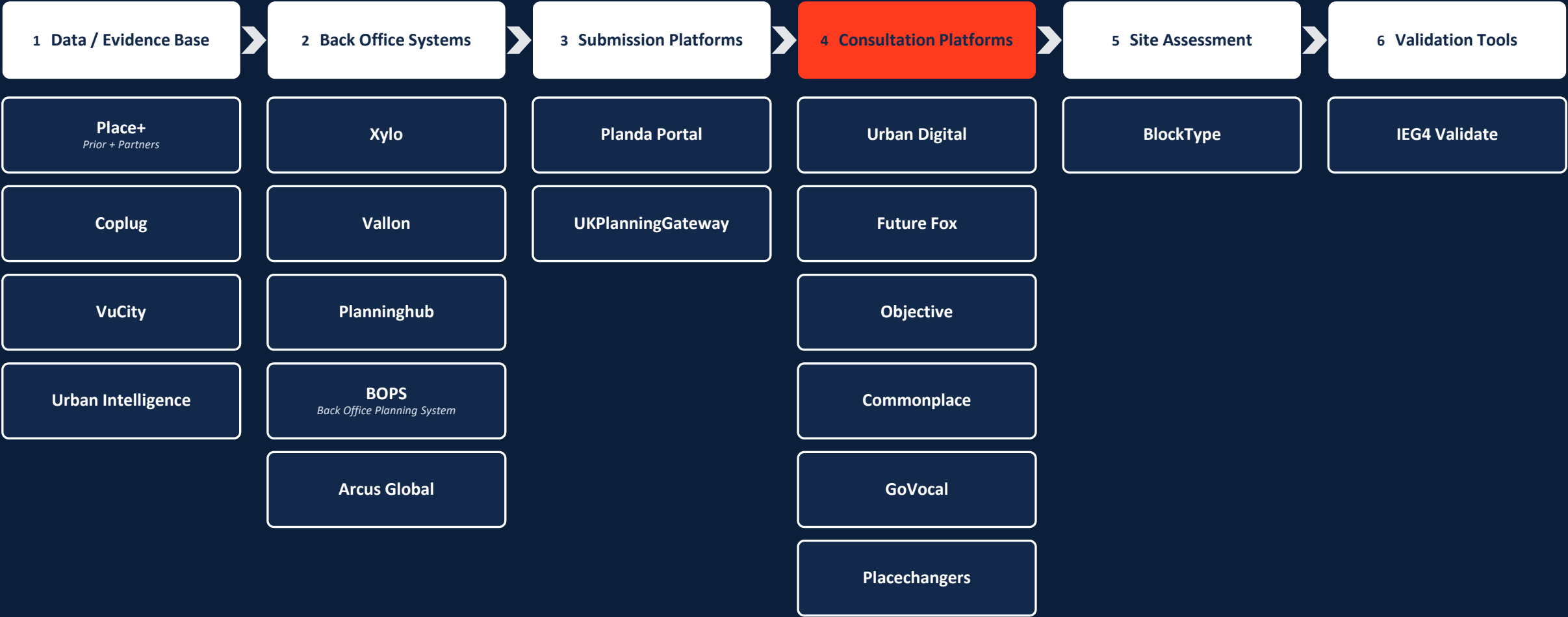
AI Submission Portal

Reviews the applications as they submit to achieve a higher validation rate.

Demonstrating reduced processing times already.

The Digital Planning Ecosystem

England's planning-technology landscape, mapped across the lifecycle: evidence → submission → case handling & consultation → decision → validation



Company Profiles by Category

Digital planning technology in England — reference directory

DATA / EVIDENCE BASE

Place+

placeplus.priorandpartners.com

Aggregates planning data into a single spatial evidence base. Evidence stage; used by LPAs and consultants.

DATA

Coplug

coplug.ai

AI engine turning planning data and policy into instant, auditable insight. Site-assessment / evidence stage; planners, developers, consultants.

DATA

VuCity

vu.city

3D digital-twin city models for design, feasibility and visual-impact review. Pre-application / design stage; LPAs, developers, architects.

DATA

Urban Intelligence

urbanintelligence.co.uk

PlaceMaker platform for digital Local Plans, site assessment and Call for Sites. Plan-making stage; built for LPA policy teams, with community input.

DATA

SUBMISSION PLATFORMS

Planda Portal

planda.co.uk

AI-assisted submission that validates and predicts approval before filing. Pre-submission stage; homeowners, agents, architects and LPAs.

SUBMISSION

UKPlanningGateway

planninggateway.co.uk

National gateway running LPA-aligned checks as applications are submitted. Submission stage; architects, agents and professionals filing to LPAs.

SUBMISSION

BACK OFFICE SYSTEMS

Xylo

buildxylo.ai

AI-native case-management workspace that drafts reports and analyses comments. Development-management stage; internal tool for LPA officers.

BACK OFFICE

Vallon

valon-ai.com

AI back-office automation for validation, redaction and fee / constraint checks. Validation-and-assessment stage; built for UK LPA teams.

BACK OFFICE

Planninghub

planning-hub.com

Cloud-based planning case-management and intelligence platform. Application handling to decision; LPA officers and agents.

BACK OFFICE

BOPS

opendigitalplanning.org

Open-source Back Office Planning System for processing applications. Part of MHCLG's Open Digital Planning programme; used by LPA officers.

BACK OFFICE

Arcus Global

arcusglobal.com

Cloud case-management for planning, building control and land charges. Intake to decision plus citizen self-service; used by LPAs.

BACK OFFICE

VALIDATION TOOLS

IEG4 Validate

ieg4.com

AI-powered planning-application validation software for local authorities. Application intake / validation stage; used by LPA planning teams.

VALIDATION

CONSULTATION PLATFORMS

Urban Digital

digitalurban.place

Digital public-engagement and application-management layer. Across the application process; used by LPAs and developers.

CONSULTATION

The Future Fox

thefuturefox.com

AI consultation-analysis turning feedback into committee-ready reports. Consultation / decision stage; used by LPAs.

CONSULTATION

Objective

objective.co.uk

Consultation, engagement and compliance-management software. Plan-making and application consultation; local-government / LPA teams.

CONSULTATION

Commonplace

commonplace.is

Community mapping and engagement platform for resident input. Early / pre-application consultation; LPAs, developers, consultants.

CONSULTATION

GoVocal

govocal.com/en-uk

Digital participation platform (formerly CitizenLab), involvement to reporting. Early engagement through statutory consultation; LPAs and public bodies.

CONSULTATION

Placechangers

placechangers.co.uk

Participatory-planning toolkit converting feedback into evidence. Across the project lifecycle; LPA, developer and urban-design teams.

CONSULTATION

SITE ASSESSMENT

BlockType

blocktype.co.uk

Automated analysis of a site's development capacity, viability and constraints. Pre-application / feasibility stage; developers, landowners and LPAs.

SITE ASSESS.

Building the other side of the conversation

Private-sector proptech is building the development industry's side — workflow tools that mirror the new public-sector stack.



Searchland

Off-market site sourcing with ownership, planning history and policy data, plus landowner outreach.

searchland.co.uk



LandTech

End-to-end land platform — sourcing, constraints, appraisal and funding; 5,000+ UK developers.

land.tech



LandClan

AI land-data platform surfacing overlooked sites, including Grey Belt, with site assessments and BNG insight.

landclan.com



Landstack

Standardised planning & land data — applications, allocations, LAAs and policy via GIS and APIs.

landstack.co.uk



Urban Intelligence

PlaceMaker digitises the Local Plan — constraints, ownership and density in one site-assessment tool.

urbanintelligence.co.uk



VU.CITY

Accurate 3D city models (3,000+ km², 15cm) to test massing, views and townscape; SiteSolve design.

vu.city



Blocktype

Drag-and-drop, policy-compliant building blocks generate instant feasibility — unit mix, GDV and policy checks.

blocktype.co.uk



Aprao

Cloud development appraisals — automated cashflows and sensitivity; a two-hour feasibility in ~10 min.

aprao.com

You can't wait this one out — waiting means it's done to you

Risk to the planning system

Back-office case management is still dominated by a small group of legacy suppliers — ageing interfaces and slow, supplier-led release cycles are where friction and cost already accumulate.

Risk around AI (protectionism)

The same AI tools cut both ways: residents and campaign groups are already using AI to mass-produce policy-laced objections, flooding LPAs with volume officers must still read.

The voices in the public

Genuine community engagement has to stay part of the picture — the tools that speed up decisions can't be allowed to drown out the people those decisions are actually for.

Call to action

Now

It is here...

Decide

Are you part of the future?

AI

Won't be everything ... BUT

STAY IN TOUCH



Three ways to take this further

01 CONNECT

LinkedIn

Follow the ongoing commentary on digital planning by following me.

02 DOWNLOAD

Future Builds app

The single planning register — site data and application history on your phone.

03 EXPLORE

Land Data Trust

Shared, federated land and planning data standards for the whole sector.

Happy to keep the conversation going — come and find me afterwards.

ARE YOU GOING TO BE **LEFT BEHIND?**

Go and look at what the options really are for your business — the market is transitioning over the next 12 months, and the standards being set now will shape how you work for years after.