

Managing legacy planning data for a digital world

Service Summary (Public Description)

Provide UK local authorities with a secure, modern platform for consolidating and analysing historic planning application data extracted from legacy systems such as Uniform, Acolaid and replicated Idox Cloud datasets.

The service standardises all data into the UK Government's planning data model, enriches it with metadata, and stores it in a geospatial, graph-enabled datastore (PostgreSQL, PostGIS, PGVector, Apache AGE).

The platform includes a centrally hosted library of planning constraints, designations, and UPRN data, enabling consistent queries and overlays across councils.

Each council receives a dedicated UK-hosted environment, with optional federation for unitary authorities.

Built-in tools include advanced search (text, spatial, semantic), graph exploration, document linkage, FOI/EIR-ready redaction, and AI-assisted interrogation using retrieval-augmented generation with full citation transparency.

Data ingestion is orchestrated through Apache Airflow, and all operations are recorded in an immutable audit datastore for compliance and transparency.

API endpoints and role-based access control (via Supabase authentication and per-row permissions) allow integration with analytics tools such as Power BI and GIS systems.

The service supports historic data consolidation, internal reporting, governance, FOI publication, and cross-council insights, with no connection to live operational planning systems.

1. Short Service Description (G-Cloud Summary)

Consolidate, standardise, and analyse historic planning application data from legacy and replicated systems.

The service structures all data using the UK Government planning data model, enriches it with SiteEngine metadata, and stores it in a spatial and graph-enabled datastore.

Features include advanced search, semantic analysis, FOI/EIR-compliant redaction, and AI-assisted interrogation, with ingestion managed via Apache Airflow and full audit logging.

Each council receives its own UK-hosted environment, with shared access to centralised datasets such as planning overlays and UPRN data.

2. G-Cloud Features & Benefits

Features

- Extraction and processing of historic planning data from legacy systems (Uniform, Acolaid, replicated Idox Cloud datasets).
- Data mapped to the UK Government planning data model with additional extensions.
- Dedicated council datastore using PostgreSQL, PostGIS, PGVector, and Apache AGE.
- Central reference datasets including planning constraints, designations, and UPRN overlays.

- Advanced text, spatial, vector, and graph search capabilities.
- FOI/EIR publication tools with automated redaction and audit tracking.
- AI-assisted interrogation using retrieval-augmented generation with citations.
- Apache Airflow ETL orchestration with validation, lineage, and idempotent re-runs.
- Immutable Audit Database for provenance, access logging, and compliance reporting.
- Role-based access using Supabase authentication and per-row permissions.
- REST/GraphQL APIs compatible with external analytics tools such as Power BI and GIS systems.
- Optional federation for unitary authorities to query multiple council datasets securely.

Benefits

- Provides a single, structured source of truth for all historic planning applications.
- Enables councils to retire ageing systems while retaining full access to their planning records.
- Supports compliance with FOI, EIR, GDPR, and local government retention requirements.
- Reduces officer workload by simplifying data search, retrieval, and summarisation.
- Enhances understanding of historic decision-making through graph and semantic analysis.
- Improves transparency and governance with complete audit trails of data access and exports.
- Supports evidence-based reporting, spatial analysis, and external dashboards.
- Allows unitary councils to query constituent planning datasets without merging live systems.
- UK-based infrastructure ensures full data residency and alignment with public sector standards.

Benefits for Councils Preparing for Unitary Transitions

Implementing provides significant advantages for councils anticipating structural change or collaboration across authorities:

1. Early alignment of fragmented planning data

- Consolidates historic planning records from multiple legacy systems before structural reorganisation occurs.
- Reduces the complexity and risk of rushed data rationalisation during transition periods.
- Establishes consistent schemas using the UK Government planning data model.

2. Reduction of long-term migration costs

- Historic data is normalised once, using repeatable Airflow ETL processes.
- Avoids repeated data cleansing, re-mapping, or system-specific export exercises after reorganisation.
- Enables future interoperability without needing to preserve old vendor systems.

3. Provides a shared reference model for future integration

- Councils already operate on a common data standard and SiteEngine ontology.
- Simplifies harmonisation conversations between authorities before forming a unitary structure.
- Supports joint working, pilot projects, or cross-boundary planning work.

4. Ensures continuity and preservation of planning records

- Reduces risk of data loss when decommissioning legacy systems during reorganisation.
- Ensures historic records remain searchable, auditable, and compliant with retention rules.
- Creates a stable, long-term archive that does not depend on vendor-specific software.

5. Supports FOI/EIR and transparency during structural change

- Provides a consistent method for responding to public requests while older systems are replaced.
- Ensures redacted, historic data remains available throughout transition programmes.

Benefits for Newly Established Unitary Councils

When a unitary council is created, Archived Planning Intelligence acts as the consolidation layer that unifies multiple former districts' historic planning data while respecting ongoing governance and access requirements.

1. Unified access across multiple historic datasets

- The unitary authority can query planning records from all predecessor councils through a single interface.
- No requirement to merge operational systems or alter historic data models.
- Officers retain the ability to explore planning history across new ward or service boundaries.

2. Maintains clear data ownership and silos where necessary

- Each predecessor council's dataset remains separate but queryable.
- Access, row-level security, and audit trails maintain legal and organisational distinctions.
- Supports public inquiries and statutory reporting where legacy boundaries still matter.

3. Enables cross-authority analysis and strategic insight

- Planning themes, developer behaviour, geographic trends, and historical decisions can be analysed across all former councils.
- Graph, spatial, and semantic search tools reveal patterns not visible in siloed systems.
- Supports evidence-based policymaking at the scale expected of a unitary authority.

4. Supports harmonised FOI/EIR responses across a larger geography

- Allows FOI officers to respond consistently, even when historic cases originated from different predecessor councils.
- Ensures a single redaction pipeline and publication workflow for the entire unitary body.

5. Facilitates post-transition transformation programmes

- Acts as the stable, centralised historic archive, allowing operational planning systems to be replaced or modernised without losing history.
- Reduces dependency on maintaining multiple ageing planning platforms during the transition period.
- Provides a low-risk foundation for future digital planning initiatives.

6. Provenance and audit across legacy boundaries

- Immutable audit logs show which dataset a record came from, when it was ingested, and how it has been accessed.
- Supports governance, scrutiny, and assurance during the first years of a new unitary council.