

Service definition

Blocktype is a **cloud-based software-as-a-service (SaaS)** platform that helps public sector organisations **understand the development potential of land at an early stage**.

The service enables users to create and compare **design-led site layouts**, generate **indicative housing capacity and feasibility metrics**, and collaborate across teams using a shared, browser-based workspace. Blocktype supports **early-stage housing capacity and density testing, regeneration, option appraisals, and internal feasibility work**, allowing teams to explore how different design and policy assumptions affect potential outcomes.

The service is **self-service**, requires no local installation, and is accessed through a standard web browser.

1. What problem the service addresses

Understanding the capacity of individual development sites is critical to decisions about:

- **Planning policy**
- **Housing delivery**
- **Infrastructure provision**
- **Regeneration and land disposal**
- **Sustainability and place quality**

However, many public bodies still rely on broad-brush density assumptions and high-level estimates when assessing site capacity. These approaches often:

- Do not reflect the specific shape, size, or constraints of individual plots
- Do not account for different housing typologies or tenure mixes
- Provide limited visibility into how assumptions translate into form
- Are difficult to explain or challenge internally

At the same time, local authorities and public bodies are often required to assess large numbers of sites, but may not have the resources to commission bespoke feasibility studies or masterplans for each one.

Blocktype is designed to sit between high-level assumptions and detailed consultancy work, providing a practical, design-led way to explore site potential early, consistently and cost efficiently.

2. Service description

Blocktype provides a browser-based spatial environment in which users can test site capacity using predefined building typologies, layout rules, and configurable assumptions.

Users define a site and apply design elements such as buildings, streets, parking and open space. As layouts are created or adjusted, the service provides real-time indicative feedback on key metrics such as unit numbers, tenure mix, density-related measures, and other policy-relevant indicators.

Layouts can be saved, compared and shared, allowing teams to:

- Explore multiple options for the same site
- Test the impact of different assumptions
- Create a shared evidence base for discussion

The service is intended to support internal appraisal, policy exploration and option testing, rather than detailed design or statutory decision-making.

3. Who the service is for

Blocktype is designed for use by public sector teams involved in housing, planning and land management, including:

- **Planning policy teams** testing housing capacity and policy assumptions
- **Regeneration teams** exploring development options for regeneration sites
- **Urban design and place-making officers** testing design options
- **Housing teams** undertaking early-stage feasibility appraisals
- **Asset management teams** assessing land in public ownership

4. How the service works

Blocktype enables users to:

- Test site capacity using **predefined, configurable residential building typologies**
- Create site layouts using **simple, visual layout tools**
- Arrange buildings, streets, parking and open space within a site boundary
- Receive **real-time indicative feedback** on key metrics such as policy and viability
- Explore different scenarios by adjusting layouts, tenures and assumptions
- Save, iterate and compare multiple options for a site
- Share layouts with colleagues for review and comment

All work takes place within a shared, cloud-hosted environment, enabling collaboration across teams and departments.

5. Key features

Web-based, self-service SaaS platform

Blocktype is accessed through a standard web browser and does not require any local installation or specialist hardware. Users can log in securely from any location with an internet connection and begin working immediately, making it suitable for distributed teams and hybrid working environments.

Design-led site capacity testing

The service allows users to explore site capacity through the creation of design-led layouts rather than relying on abstract density assumptions. This enables users to understand how spatial arrangement, building form and layout choices influence indicative capacity outcomes.

Configurable residential building typologies

Users can apply predefined residential building typologies that represent common housing forms. These typologies can be configured using adjustable parameters, enabling users to test different assumptions while maintaining consistency across sites and scenarios.

Visual layout tools for buildings and public realm

Blocktype provides intuitive tools to arrange buildings, streets, parking and open space within a site boundary. Layouts are created visually, helping users to understand spatial relationships and communicate options clearly to colleagues.

Real-time indicative policy-related metrics

As layouts are created or adjusted, the service provides real-time indicative feedback on key metrics, such as unit numbers, tenure mix, density-related measures, parking and open space requirements and CIL calculations.

Indicative feasibility inputs

The platform provides indicative feasibility-related information such as the Gross Development Value of the site. This is based on the layout and assumptions applied, such as unit mix and tenure, sales values and construction costs. This supports high-level comparison between options and helps inform early internal appraisal.

Scenario creation, saving and comparison

Users can create multiple scenarios for the same site, save them within the platform, and compare different options. This supports iterative testing and helps teams explore trade-offs between different assumptions and layouts.

Collaboration, sharing and commenting

Blocktype enables users to share layouts and scenarios with colleagues across departments or teams. Users can review, comment on and discuss options within a shared workspace, supporting cross-team collaboration and reducing duplication of work.

3D visualisation of site layouts and massing

Blocktype enables users to view site layouts as three-dimensional representations, allowing building massing and spatial relationships to be understood more clearly than in plan view alone. This helps users interpret scale, form and arrangement in a more intuitive way.

Exportable outputs for reporting and discussion

Layouts and associated outputs can be exported in common formats to support internal reporting, presentations and discussion. This allows teams to incorporate outputs into wider workflows and documentation.

Customisable building types, constraints and planning policy assumptions

Blocktype allows users to add and manage custom building types, define site constraints, and configure planning policy assumptions that are used in calculations. This enables organisations to reflect local context and test different scenarios consistently within the software.

6. Service benefits and limitations.

Faster early-stage site appraisal

Blocktype enables teams to explore site capacity and feasibility at an early stage without the need to commission detailed studies. By providing a design-led, self-service environment, the service helps users generate and compare options more quickly, supporting timely internal decision-making.

Improved transparency of assumptions

The service makes underlying assumptions about layout, typology and capacity visible through spatial layouts and real-time indicative metrics. This helps teams understand how different assumptions affect outcomes and supports clearer internal discussion and scrutiny.

More consistent analysis across sites

By using predefined typologies and shared configuration settings, Blocktype supports a more consistent approach to site appraisal across multiple sites or programmes. This can help reduce variation caused by ad-hoc methods and improve comparability between options.

Support for cross-team collaboration

Blocktype provides a shared workspace where layouts and scenarios can be saved, reviewed and commented on by multiple users. This supports collaboration between planning, housing, regeneration and asset management teams and helps create a shared understanding of site potential.

Reduced reliance on bespoke early-stage studies

The service allows public sector teams to undertake early-stage capacity and feasibility work in-house, helping them reserve external consultancy input for later stages where more detailed or specialist work is required.

Greater confidence in internal challenge and review

By providing visual layouts and indicative metrics, Blocktype supports teams when reviewing and discussing assumptions provided by third parties. This can help officers ask more informed questions and engage more confidently in internal and external discussions.

Better use of limited public sector capacity

Blocktype is designed to help teams assess more sites using existing staff and resources. By streamlining early-stage appraisal work, the service supports more efficient use of time and expertise within public sector organisations.

Clearer communication of options

The combination of visual layouts, 3D views and structured outputs helps teams communicate options more clearly within their organisations. This can support internal briefings, reporting and discussion without requiring specialist visualisation skills.

Service limitations:

Blocktype is designed to support early-stage option testing and internal appraisal. It is not intended for detailed architectural design beyond RIBA Stage 2, nor does it replace specialist design, engineering, viability, or technical assessment work.

Outputs generated by the service are indicative and based on available data and industrial best practice. They should not be relied upon as final designs, cost plans, valuations, or viability assessments. Assumptions and outcomes may change in response to:

- Detailed design development at later project stages
- Changes in market conditions, build costs or sales values
- Policy requirements or site-specific technical constraints
- Further survey, engineering or environmental work

The service does not provide statutory planning, legal or professional advice and does not determine planning outcomes.

Blocktype is not a platform for the detailed design of individual buildings beyond RIBA stage 2. It is intended to complement, rather than replace professional services used at later stages of the development process.

7. Onboarding and implementation

Blocktype requires no technical implementation or system integration in order to begin using the service. Users are onboarded through secure account creation and can access the platform immediately once credentials are issued.

Standard onboarding materials and guidance are provided to help users understand the core functionality of the service. Optional remote onboarding sessions are available for customers who require additional support in getting started or in embedding the service into their internal workflows.

8. Service management

The Blocktype service is fully managed by Blocktype. All hosting, maintenance, updates and improvements are delivered centrally, ensuring that customers always access the most up-to-date version of the platform.

Enhancements and updates are deployed in a way that does not disrupt existing customer use. Ongoing service management focuses on maintaining security, availability, improving usability and responding to user feedback to inform future improvements.

9. Support

Blocktype provides support via email during UK business hours. Support requests are logged, triaged, tracked and resolved according to our customer support processes, ensuring issues are addressed in a timely and consistent manner.

Optional enhanced support arrangements may be available, depending on customer requirements. Support services are focused on helping users resolve issues with the operation of the software, rather than providing planning, design or professional advice.

10. Pricing model

Blocktype is offered under a transparent, subscription-based pricing model. Pricing is structured to be clear, repeatable and published, allowing customers to understand costs upfront without the need for bespoke negotiation.

Subscriptions are structured on an organisational and user-based basis, depending on the service configuration. All pricing information is published on the Digital Marketplace and applies consistently across customers using that platform.

11. Social value

Blocktype supports public sector social value objectives by helping organisations make more effective use of limited resources when undertaking housing and land-related work. By enabling early-stage site appraisal and option testing to be carried out in-house, the service can reduce duplication of effort and support more efficient decision-making, resulting in more homes being built quicker and more cost effectively.

The service supports better-informed discussions around housing delivery, regeneration and land use, helping public sector teams explore options transparently and consistently. By improving internal capability and collaboration, Blocktype contributes to more resilient and effective public sector planning and regeneration processes, thereby improving the productivity of the country's public sector home building programmes.

Technical considerations

Cloud deployment model

Blocktype is provided as a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution. The service is accessed through a standard web browser and does not require any software installation, plug-ins, or specialist local hardware. All application logic, processing and storage are hosted in the cloud and managed centrally by Blocktype.

This deployment model allows users to access the service from different locations and devices, supports collaborative working across teams, and ensures that all customers benefit from updates and improvements without local configuration or maintenance.

Data protection and privacy

Blocktype processes personal data on behalf of the customer under a Data Processing Agreement that forms part of the overall service contract. Under that agreement and applicable law (including UK GDPR and the UK Data Protection Act 2018), the customer is the data controller and Blocktype is the data processor responsible for processing personal data only on the controller's instructions. [OBJ]

The types of personal data processed in connection with the service include account and contact details, connection data and other information required to deliver the software. Categories of data subjects include authorised users and relevant contacts.

[OBJ]

Blocktype and any authorised sub-processors implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect personal data against unauthorised or unlawful processing, accidental loss, destruction or damage. Blocktype will inform the customer without unreasonable delay if it becomes aware of a personal data breach relating to the customer's data, and will assist the customer in responding to rights requests and compliance obligations where required by data protection law. [OBJ]

At the end of the contract, personal data will be returned or deleted in accordance with customer instructions and legal requirements, and Blocktype will support the customer's compliance with its obligations under the data protection legislation.

Data storage and hosting

Blocktype hosts customer data on secure cloud infrastructure, with storage located within the UK. Encryption is applied to protect personal and non-personal data both in transit and at rest.

The service includes regular automated backups designed to protect against data loss. Backup and restore processes are managed by Blocktype and support the recovery of customer data in the event of system failure or other incidents.

Where Blocktype engages third-party sub-processors (such as cloud infrastructure providers), those sub-processors are contractually bound to process customer personal data in accordance with the same protections as set out in the Data Processing Agreement. Blocktype remains responsible for the actions of any sub-processors it engages in relation to the processing of personal data. ^[OBJ]

Security

Security is a core consideration in the design and operation of the Blocktype service. Access to the platform is controlled through secure user authentication, with role-based permissions used to ensure users can only access features and data appropriate to their role.

Blocktype holds CyberEssentials certification, demonstrating that appropriate technical controls are in place to protect against cyber threats. The platform is also subject to regular penetration testing, which is used to identify potential vulnerabilities and inform ongoing improvements to the service's security posture.

Customer data is protected using encryption both at rest and in transit. Data stored by the service is encrypted when held within Blocktype's systems, and all data transferred between users and Blocktype's servers is encrypted using industry-standard secure communication protocols. This helps protect data against unauthorised access during storage and transmission.

The service is regularly maintained and updated to address security risks and improve resilience. Monitoring and logging are used to support the detection and investigation of potential security incidents, and backup and recovery procedures are in place to minimise disruption in the event of an incident.

Security policies and measures are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment with current best practice and applicable regulatory requirements.