

Inside Stories

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Topics

Following a competitive bidding process, East Herts District Council have announced the launch of four projects, backed by over £270,000 of funding from the Department from Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to innovatively use digital and design tools in the planning process.

The Planning Skills Delivery Fund (£100k) will support East Herts Council in the development of a District Design Code, which will set the standard for high-quality design in developments across the district in an effort to maintain East Hertfordshire's distinctive character, whilst also encouraging sustainable design practices.

Supported by the Digital Planning Improvement Fund (£100k), the council will also undertake a Digital Maturity Self-Assessment and construct a relevant action plan. Whilst digital tools are already used in the planning application process, this funding will allow for further modernisation to make the process easier and more effective for residents and planning staff alike in supporting sustainable growth across the district. East Herts District Council were the only authority in the county to be awarded such funding.

Furthermore, the PropTech Innovation Fund (£73,152) aims to transform engagement with the plan-making process, and its awarding will lead to improvements in the council's current approaches to land assessment and visualisation. In partnership with Cadcorp, the introduction of a "Call for Sites" platform and the implementation of a WebMap will afford communities and developers the opportunity to suggest sites for development geographically. This will save planners significant resources, whilst also simplifying the impact assessment of allocation.

Additionally, the council will pilot the government's connectivity assessment tool, developed by the Department for Transport, in order to better understand the sustainability and accessibility of sites proposed for development. This tool maps how easy it is to get to and from certain locations, and will help to ensure well-connected sites are promoted for development.

Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward, Executive Member for Planning and Growth, said, "I am pleased that the diligence of our dedicated and enthusiastic planning department has been recognised, and that we have been deservedly selected to take part in the Department for Transport's Connectivity Tool pilot.

Innovation in the delivery of our planning service, to work smarter and reduce administration, will better allow planners to concentrate on ensuring East Herts retains its

characterful identity amidst development, in accordance with a District Design Code. Streamlining the planning application process and making it more effective for everybody involved will afford us greater engagement with communities and developers alike.

This funding, and these projects, will support our service in achieving its goals.”

Topics