

6. Benefits case

Key benefits and identified costs

The benefits of a streamlined validation process are significant for applicants as well as planning authorities. We estimate savings of £66k to £171k per authority, per year from the current cost of validation.

This represents up to 3,430 hrs of officer time every year, or around 98 working weeks, that can be redirected to higher value work. This can allow more contact time with applicants and agents, and speed up their decisions.

The minimum viable product (MVP) only focuses on householder applications, but these represent a significant proportion of overall applications. The schema and service model for the MVP have built the foundations for a scalable solution to realise these total savings in terms of officer hours.

Calculating the potential benefits

Calculating an accurate total benefit is complex due to the indirect nature of some costs and uncertainty around others.

Our approach:

- Identified local authority costs and savings
- Identified other costs and savings
- Identified non-financial benefits
- Calculated a high and low best estimate of savings for all English local authorities
- Calculated a best estimate for other savings
- Combined the best estimates of the local authority savings with the other savings to arrive at a best estimate national annual saving

Details of the assumptions and calculations made can be found in the [RIPA Alpha Report spreadsheet](#)

Local Authority Costs and Savings

We identified the following costs and savings for Local Authorities:

- The **direct saving** of staff time when processing all applications. This saving arises from a lighter touch system with fewer documents and more machine readable data.
- The **direct saving** of staff time when processing invalid applications. This is based on the various causes of invalidation being eliminated or reduced.
- The **direct saving** of case officer time when processing all applications (for example: fast identification of documents using standard names)
- The **indirect saving** of staff time providing advice to customers (around how to submit a valid application)
- The **direct cost** of any digital license for using the RIPA tool
- The **direct cost** of setting up the tool (back-office integration, staff training, applicant engagement)

All Other Costs and Savings

We identified there would be additional costs and savings for applicants and other stakeholders:

- The **direct saving** of applicant time when making an application
- The **direct saving** of applicant time correcting invalid applications
- The **direct saving** of a submission fee (e.g. Planning Portal)
- The **indirect saving** of reduced risk to projects that are determined quickly
- The **indirect saving** of stakeholder time when responding to an application (for example: fast identification of documents using standard names)
- The **direct cost** of the completed discovery work
- The **direct cost** of the completed Alpha phase
- The **direct cost** of the proposed Beta phase

Non-financial Benefits

In addition to the savings identified, non-monetary gains include:

- Enriched working with fewer mundane tasks
- More transparent/less opaque system for users
- More streamlined experience for the users
- Promotes reduced/simplified application requirements for applicants
- Clearer communication between back office system and users
- Shorter application handling times for applicants
- Higher-value contact time with case officer – dealing with application rather than validation

Note: Costs and savings that could not be quantified or didn't round to more than £1m pa are excluded from the savings calculations.



Potential National Annual Savings – Summary

Combining the calculated savings:

£22m–£56m Local authority savings

£9m Submission fees

£68m Application preparation savings

£27m Invalid application savings

Indirect savings that are uncoded include:

Reduced risk to projects that are determined quickly

Quicker delivery of development

Stakeholder time saved (e.g: standard naming for documents)

Staff time saved advising how to submit a valid application

The potential national annual savings could be up to £126–£160m with full adoption