Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

Final Report

September 2022

Local Planning Authority/ies	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Date Report Submitted	3 October 2022

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Executive Summary

Region	Southeast
LA Rural-Urban Classification Category	Predominantly Urban
Project summary	The aim of the project was to involve the community more in the development of a new master plan for the town centre using a digital consultation platform.
Funding allocated	£125,000
Supplier(s) Appointed	The Future Fox
Consultation Topic	Town Centre Master Plan
Consultation Outcomes	We have been able to demonstrate a high level of community engagement
Consultation dates	27 July 2022 – 31 August 2022

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1.0 Project Summary

- **Summary:** provide a high-level overview of the project in a few sentences or bullet points. If applicable, include links to your project website and/or images of consultation materials.

  The Council worked with The Future Fox and David Lock Associates to develop a digital tool, (Placebuilder) for a consultation to inform a new masterplan for the town centre. The main components of the project were:

  - Procurement.
  - Development and testing (with community steering group).
  - Development of creatives for social media campaign.
  - 5 and ½ week consultation using digital consultation tool and permanent wall display.
  - 2 in person "meet the team" days.
  - Reporting and analysis of results.

- **Status quo pre-PropTech:** how did your local authority approach planning consultations before you received PropTech funding?

  Historically the council has taken bespoke approaches to consultation (not just town planning) depending on the different aims and requirements of each. For planning consultations, we had historically used software designed for more "traditional" forms of engagement, like commenting on documents, such as *Inovem*. For other corporate consultations the council held in person exhibitions and collected various forms of hard copy questionnaires and feedback forms.

- **Outcomes:** what did the project achieve? Summarise the main impacts in a few bullet points, a table, or other format. Note: there is a section dedicated to project outcomes further on in this report so only include a high-level summary here.

- No. of respondents to consultation: **1979** on digital platform and **6** hard copy questionnaires.
- 84% of respondents were residents of Epsom and Ewell
- The highest proportion of people to respond in terms of age were between the ages of 40 and 49
- 188 respondents were in the 18-29 category
- 6.6% of people who responded were from either Asian, Asian British, Multiple or Other ethnic background.
- 8.6% of people who responded to the questionnaire had either a limited or significant disability.
- 58.5% of people who responded were women.
- 55% of respondents stated that they had not responded to a planning consultation before.

- **Opportunities**: what did the funding allow you to do that you wouldn't have

-been able to do otherwise?

The funding allowed us to:

− Significantly improve the number of people who engaged in this consultation compared with others.

− Achieve a more proportional level of response across different age groups.

− Run a consultation that was easy for people to "passively engage" e.g. through their phone.

● **Funding review:** we are working to help other LPAs budget in the future and understand where you encountered surprises. Please fill out the table below and include any additional reflections about the funding in the text box underneath the table. For example: was more/less funding needed than you expected and for what elements? With the benefit of hindsight, how would you re-do your budget if you were starting this project again?

	Amount Bid	Amount Spent	
A) Digital map development ● Software package ● Design team meetings ● Concept development/adaptation ● Transfer of data ● Council IT upgrades ● Implementing graphics changes ● Changes post test phase Capacity building for future use	£85,000	Subscription	£24,295.00
		Delivery of Platform	£9,900.00
		Council Staff time	£39590.00
B) Design ● Review and advice on product options ● Development of Master Plan map graphics Post test phase	£15,000	Data visuals	£5,690.00
		3D Model	£5,750.00
C) Engagement ● Initial meeting to discuss engagement strategy ● Recruitment of community	£20,000	Exhibition costs	£21,132.04 (see also

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testing volunteer group Facilitation of engagement meetings o Test phase feedback		(including consultant time, printing and QR code subscription)	*council staff time*)
D) Project management and support ● Product research ● Tender process and selection ● Meeting facilitation ● Objective setting Final report writing	£2,000	Reporting (from prop tech company and planning consultant) Also included under "Council Staff Time"	£9190
E) Communications ● Newsletters ● Social Media ● Website updates Media briefings	£2,000	Delivery of Social Media Plan	£10,000
F) Reporting	£1,000	See "council staff time"	

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2.0 Lessons Learned
As part of developing guidance for best practice, we want to understand the lessons learned at each stage of your project. We know that these project stages might look different for different projects so feel free to edit the table to reflect your particular experience. Please provide as much detail as possible as these insights will be integral to developing national best practice guidance. Where applicable, please share links or attachments to supplementary evidence such as a copy of your business case, supplier briefs etc. These can be included in the appendices at the end of the report.

Project stage or milestone	Approach - what process was undertaken?	Lessons Learned
Getting started: Developing the business case/gaining organisational buy–in to apply for Round 2 funding.	A case was built for applying to the PropTech Fund having decided to commission a masterplan for the town centre. That decision was made by the head of the service supported by the director. The general justification was supported by the fact that a number of objectives in the council's corporate plans involved improving customer services, specifically with the use of digital technology. Whilst the case had already been successful, demonstrating a strategic link between the master planning process and wider corporate priorities around community engagement and digital ways of working was useful when explaining to councillors why we had opted to commit resources to this project.	It helps, when building a business case, to emphasise the wider corporate priorities that a project like this can meet, particularly around community engagement and new ways of working. That way it's not just seen as a project for the benefit of planning/placemaking/environment but other directorates too. It then becomes a project of corporate significance.
Procurement: developing supplier brief and project budget	Whilst we had a general idea of what we wanted to use property technology for, we were still not entirely sure what exactly each supplier could provide and how far we could utilise tech for engagement purposes. Therefore, before we	It is worth investigating if your council has a waiver procedure for tender processes for contracts under a certain threshold (other than a procurement framework). Having a waiver clause was very useful in being able to

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	wrote the brief we decided to undertake a three stage "soft market testing" process. As the total project spend would be under a certain threshold set out in our Contract Standing Orders (CSO), we were allowed to appoint a supplier under a "waiver" to the CSO subject to being able to demonstrate that a fair approach was taken. In order to demonstrate fairness the stages comprised the following: 1) Web based research of 18 proptech companies using information readily available (including DLUHC briefing sessions). 2) Initial phone calls with 4 shortlisted companies 3) Development of market testing questionnaire to each of the 4 companies who had agreed to fill one in.	use the procurement process as a way of finding out what different providers could do through dialogue rather than a one way response to a tender document. Though we were advised some suppliers may be reluctant to commit resources to a non formal tender process, most were very happy to respond to a questionnaire and discuss things informally over the phone. A phone call out of courtesy to the non-successful ones was appreciated.
Procurement: finding and appointing a supplier(S)	After reviewing results from the market testing questionnaires, a more detailed specification was drawn up (having conducted the same process to appoint a planning consultant to do the masterplan). The supplier was asked to draw up a fee proposal against the new more detailed specification. The specification and the supplier's response to it became the contract that both parties were signatories too.	See above. Seek legal advice about data sharing agreements (ensuring council retains rights to data) and intellectual property rights.

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Onboarding: Proptech suppliers, additional consultants, and internal teams	An inception meeting was held with the supplier and planning consultant. We tried to encourage the supplier and planning consultant to act on initiative and collaborate independently of the council to find solutions to some of the challenges we had presented (e.g. question design). In order to facilitate this we were keen to remove as many barriers to communication as possible. The simplest way to do this was by adding all contacts as guests to a specific "team" in Microsoft Teams. MS Teams and sharepoint were also useful as spaces to store documents. This saved passing everything through email. We were keen to be as clear as possible about expectations and who had responsibility for what. We had thought carefully about this in the project specification and were up front about what we expected from each party. Splitting the project up into stages, we drew up a project timeline explaining when each deliverable was required. This was also a good opportunity to work with the Council's communication team. We agreed that they would draft and engagement strategy but they were also invited to the inception activities to advise but also get a flavour for what was to come during the consultation.	It is important to remember that many prop tech companies are not as familiar with planning as others, and may not immediately see the nuance of some requirements of the master planning process, (perhaps dismissing things as unnecessary technicalities). On the other hand, many experienced planning consultants may have become slightly disenfranchised with or are sceptical about digital ways of engagement and the "keep it short and simple" approach, because it is difficult to convey the intricacies of what they are doing through simple questionnaires. It's important to acknowledge the perceived hurdles on both sides but keep conversation open throughout the process. You may find yourself having to be an advocate for either planning or property technology! We agreed on a set of targets that the whole team (council, prop tech supplier, planning consultant) could buy into. Though there were no sticks to encourage us to meet them, developing an "espirit de corps" around them did help keep us on our toes.

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Campaign Development: developing marketing and engagement strategies. This might also include developing survey questions, platform content, or user research.	**Developing Platform** The supplier had overall editorial control of the platform and therefore required clear instructions from the council about how to set it up. The council had to provide information such as: ● "Copy" i.e., text to be used including explanation of the project, FAQs, "about" etc. ● Corporate comms guideline (e.g. for colour palettes). ● Images It was important to make the platform look engaging and not put people off. Therefore, the importance of keeping text to a minimum was emphasised repeatedly by the supplier. **Developing Questions** This was the most challenging element of the development process. Striking a balance between making questions simple enough for people to engage with and substantive enough that answers to them would have a demonstrable impact on the outcome of the masterplan was a constant subject of discussion among the project team.	**Editorial Control** As the client we had no *direct* editorial control of the content of the consultation platform. This meant that every amendment had to be requested to the supplier. Whilst the requests were carried out in a fairly timely manner it did mean that overall progress was slower than anticipated and there were extra steps to take when making minor corrections (like grammar in the "copy"). It's important to clarify editorial permissions before the project and factor in time accordingly. The other issue with not having editorial control is that as the client, we did not know exactly what was possible with the technology and what was not. This did lead to some ambiguities. **Survey Structure** Having 3 parts to the survey appeared to be the best solution to striking the balance between achieving "substance" and response rate. However, the results showed that only a minority of people answered all 3 sections. **Trade offs** We were consistently advised of the risk of

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As many planners will know, extracting information from open ended consultation responses can be a laborious exercise with findings difficult to quantify. We therefore tried to design the consultation using multiple choice questions of various design such as "yes/no" or "likert" scale questions.

As well as making analysis more straightforward, it was considered that these types of questions would be easier for people to engage with but posed the same challenges reflected above.

Originally 8 questions were drafted, the idea being that each one would tell us about multiple issues. E.g. by asking questions about transport we would indirectly have a steer about climate change.

However, that approach was not considered clear enough and owing other complexity of issues around placemaking and differences of opinion among the project team the number and type of questions grew to over 18, each with a number of different options.

The questionnaire was therefore split into three parts. The first was a poll asking general questions about what people think about the town centre and how they would like to see it change.

the impact on engagement if there were too many questions, or if the questions were too complicated. The platform did end up having more questions than the supplier recommended. However, the level of engagement was still very good.

There is no exact science to getting this right. However, it could be argued that as long as the questions are engaging, the risk of losing people out of boredom can be mitigated.

Social media advertising

As there was an intermediary between the council and the social media agent it was difficult to difficult to understand how the social media advertising worked. More time than expected was spent "approving" creatives including videos which made use of stock images.

The second was more focused around 4 "opportunity areas" identified based on evidence we had about developer aspirations on them. The third was an interactive map.

The third element was one of the unique selling points of Placebuilder. Wanting to avoid a scenario where we would receive multiple open ended comments, we were keen to create "pop up" boxes which would allow people to express sentiment around particular issues.

Unfortunately the supplier did not have the ability to do this. We therefore had 4 separate maps relating to theme (buildings, movement and public realm).

In our bid for the project we had envisaged the use of digital 3D models to show a range of proposals for people to see during the consultation.

However, this brought to the surface an important question about the purpose of the consultation; was it to capture public sentiment about the town centre for the masterplanning process to respond to, or was it meant to show people a set of preconceived ideas? The advice of the masterplanning consultant was that the former would be better in order for better buy in from the community.

Therefore, a 3D model was commissioned but its purpose was to show the existing town centre, particularly focused on "opportunity areas" we had identified in the second part of the consultation. This showed built form from various angles, which helped contextualise some of the questions. By having the 3D model set up, this would also lay the foundation to map on proposals once the masterplan was finalised (but this would be after the prop tech project).

Another important issue was around how we would capture demographic data. As well as being able to get a better idea of who was responding to the consultation there were a number of other advantages considered. One was that by capturing demographic data we could better undertake segmentation analysis of the results. The second was that, as another unique selling point of Placebuilder was access to a real time reporting via a virtual dashboard, we could keep tabs on whether there were any obvious gaps in responses early on, which could help us steer our communications during the consultation process.

Aside from what demographic data we wanted a main point of contention was the risk associated with response rate if people felt they would be sacrificing privacy by answering the consultation.

On balance it was considered worth the risk, and the questionnaire was designed in such a way that respondents would be taken to a demographic question page before they could submit their questionnaire answers, but the requirement to fill that page in was optional.

Demographic questions
- Age
- Ethnic origin
- Disability
- Connection with the borough
- Whether had answered a planning consultation before

Recruiting Steering Group

Another part of the project we had committed to was testing the consultation with representatives of the community before it went live.

Through the council's community liaison officer we contacted a number of local groups and schools including

Epsom Civic Society
Epsom and Ewell families
Epsom Islamic centre
Epsom common association
Disability information centre Epsom

	University for the Creative Arts Sustainable Epsom and Ewell Epsom High School NESCOT college Surrey Sikh society Go Epsom / Epsom BID Glyn School, Ewell. Rosebery School, Epsom Epsom Refuge Network Central Surrey Voluntary Action Sight for Surrey Epsom Age Concern Test Phase Social Media Creatives We received a warm response from most of the groups who were willing to put volunteers forward. Central Surrey Voluntary Action agreed to post a position of "digital platform tester" on their jobsite (screenshot of advert in appendices). Had we had more time we would have liked to have done an in person steering group. However, in the end we opted to take a virtual approach. In the end around 6 individuals were put forward to test the platform. They were given a week to try it and then submit feedback via another form	

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the supplier designed:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe44tgzjmfu_s_JVRTRr5cjGSYBhtYSYRoLC5RBOL-gl3X8xw/viewform

A summary of the responses were tabulated and fed back to the supplier with additional reflections from the council on the comments (it will be used to feedback to the individuals who participated). As well as technical errors, the feedback was useful to understand the usability of the platform. For example, a common complaint was that there was "too much back and forth" between different sections of the questionnaire. This prompted us to rethink the number of subsections. There were also comments about the complexity of language used, for which we found alternative wording.

Posters

In preparation for the launch of the campaign we had posters designed by a professional graphic agency, which we placed at strategic points in the borough. The poster had a "dynamic" QR code (which meant you could change the what the code linked to) which linked to the platform. The subscribed to qr-code-generator.com which had been retained for other council business. An example of the posters can be seen in the appendices (presentation).

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Complimentary Activities

Whilst we were keen to test the effectiveness of a digital consultation, we believed it was still important to have some physical material and engage in face-to-face activities. For this reason we took advantage of a large hoarding on a disused unit in the local shopping centre. On this hoarding we worked with the planning consultant to erect a temporary display which posed some of the questions on the consultation and displayed some visualisations to prompt discussion. The hoarding also included QR codes for people to access the platform on.

It was agreed that council officers and the consultant team would be available for two full days during the consultation to speak with members of the public

Hard Copy Questionnaires

We created a hard copy questionnaire to be printed on request. Whilst we did not want to exclude anyone from the consultation, by making the questionnaires available to be picked up (and not emailed) people would at least try to complete the questionnaire online.

Library offer

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We agreed with local libraries that anyone wanting to take part on the questionnaire who did not have access to a smartphone, tablet or computer, could use computers at libraries with or without library cards. Library staff expressed a willingness to help people who were struggling but were also given access to the hard copy to print off it was too difficult.

Communications Plan

We worked with our communications team to develop a communications strategy, which set out how we were going to use all our communications channels to advertise the consultation. Whilst we were keen for the comms team to commit to regular messaging throughout the life of the consultation, the details of social media schedules etc. was left to them.

Social Media Advertising Creatives

A significant part of the funding (£10k) went into developing a social media advertising campaign. This was delivered by a sub contracted company (Quick Fox). We had no direct contact with them and had to rely on our prop tech supplier as an intermediary. Our understanding is that Quick Fox

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	had access to the advertising on Instagram and Facebook, and made decisions about which users to display adverts to. They could control geographic area and other variables based on users' interests. Quite a significant amount of time was spent discussing "creatives" i.e., the images and wording that people would see on their Instagram and facebook adverts. As well as providing our own images, Quick Fox sourced some generic pictures of people doing various activities that people could relate to, which were passed to us for approval. With the general assumption that people would interact with the advert if they saw people who looked like them, the majority of the creatives showed young people smiling, working and studying. Our comms team helped us select the pictures. We also agreed wording and colour schemes for the adverts.	
Campaign launch and management: working with suppliers to 'go live', attending in person / hybrid events, troubleshooting tech issues	**Consultation Launch** The consultation was "launched" at the end of July and ran for 5 and ½ weeks. To launch the campaign we sent emails to stakeholders who had signed up to be kept abreast of planning consultations using the gov.notify system (a very valuable resource), updates to our website, notifications in councillor newsletters and posts on the council's social	**Links & analysis** A summary table of how people accessed the PlaceBuilder platform is shown in the appendices. During the soft market testing phase the supplier had stated that they would be able to collect data about how people had accessed the platform. Though we assumed this was a bespoke offer from the supplier, we subsequently realised after the campaign launch was that it in practice, the supplier

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media pages.

The first troubleshooting we had to do was at the beginning of the launch when the supplier had told us they had not "reset" the questionnaire from the testing phase after the campaign had launched. Whilst we were concerned that we may lose the first few days worth of data, we were assured that the data collected could be saved and manually inputted.

In person exhibition

Officers were present for 2 days at the shopping centre where the temporary consultation board was. The display was well located in the main concourse which meant that people would naturally see it as they walked past (as opposed to having to enter a unit). Because it was located in an area akin to an indoor thoroughfare, we were unable to log how many people "attended". However, as we were more interested in the number of people who actively engaged (by answering the questionnaire) we were less concerned with gathering exact metrics at the exhibition, because their involvement was more likely to be passive. We knew that generally the shopping centre attracted a significant footfall as the main retail centre and by default we would capture a large amount of people on the days we

created google analytics links for each access point (e.g., email, web page, QR code etc.) which the council team had to embed into its correspondence, emails, website etc.

Unfortunately, many of the emails had already been sent by the time we were aware we had to do this. It is therefore important to be clear about how exactly analytics are to be done and who is responsible for doing it.

Set-up aside, the analytics were useful in determining how people accessed the platform. A significant majority accessed it from their mobile phone and from links on the council's website (the link to was in all the notifications we sent out through notify.gov, newsletter and social media). Surprisingly, the number of people who accessed through the QR code was relatively low. Similarly surprising was the low number shown against Instagram. A high proportion of people accessed from facebook but it is not entirely clear whether this was directly through the paid for facebook adverts that the social media agent had created or the council's own facebook page.

Make sure data is reset before consultation goes live.

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were there and for the duration of the display.

Consultation monitoring

Perhaps the biggest advantage of using the digital platform was the real time reporting on the virtual dashboard that we had access to. This allowed us to monitor the consultation responses as they came in and crucially, demographic data. Two examples of where this helped are as follows:

Two thirds of the way through the consultation we realised that response rates among ethnic groups were low. This prompted a discussion with the supplier about what could be done to tweak advertising to see if we could attract more responses from this demographic. The suggestion put forward was that we could change the images used in the advertising to reflect more diverse groups of people. In the end we were able to show that we had improved on responses from ethnic minority groups compared to previous consultations, though it is difficult to prove if there was a causational relationship with the change in images.

The second example of when the real time reporting was useful was when, having been contacted by a disabled charity seeking information on how we had taken measures not

Exhibition Space

Whilst not directly related to the digital component of the consultation, it is worth mentioning how effective the exhibition space we had was. In the middle of a shopping centre with high footfall, in the main concourse (as opposed to in a unit), meaning that it did not have to be manned. Such space is not always available but worth trying to seek out.

Real time reporting

Arguably the most tangibly useful element of the platform for consultation purposes was real time reporting.

Monitoring

Whilst this was not a surprise, we found it was important not to "fire and forget". I.e. after the launch, it was important to keep monitoring the consultation and check in with the project team.

	to exclude disabled people, we were able to quickly report that people with disabilities were indeed responding to the consultation (reflecting measures we had taken to make sure the platform was accessible).This was a good foundation on which to explain what steps we had taken (e.g. ensured the platform was compatible with screen readers).	
Campaign wrap-up: Closing campaigns, running analysis, agreeing next steps	**Analysis of results** In our specification we had required a full report of consultation results at the end of the consultation. The supplier was keen to emphasise that the real time dashboard was, in effect, a defacto report. This did raise an interesting issue about whether, in the world of "real time" reporting a full report at the end of the process was necessary. Our view was that it was. The supplier produced a powerpoint with the results. Many of the results showed average "sentiment" against particular statements, which was a good way of getting an overall snapshot of people's attitude and feeling. What was particularly impressive was how the supplier managed to capture sentiment from open ended comments on the interactive map. That enabled	**Analysis expectations** It is important to be clear about what level of analysis you will require from the outset and from who. Whilst it may be acceptable simply to see the "results" of the consultation, with such rich data collected, we were hoping that we could draw out some more nuanced findings. **Cross segmentation analysis** One of the aims of the analysis was to ascertain how trends in answers to some questions varied depending on answers to others (cross segmentation).

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	us to see where there were clusters of positive and negative sentiment. The supplier had a specialist data analyst who was physically going through the data and producing the graphs, which was a charged for service (albeit included in the price). The supplier was also able to add responses from the 6 hard copy questionnaires received to the report, though this did take additional time. Whilst the supplier was able to produce the report there was little analysis. We therefore asked our planning consultant to undertake that work with our guidance, and most of this fell to the council's team.	
Feedback loops: e.g. developing opportunities for ongoing feedback from the community, following up with people who responded to the consultation, sharing consultation insights with key stakeholders	**Feedback loop** A general "thank you" went out on social media with some high level stats (e.g. 55% of people said they hadn't been involved in a consultation before). It is the intention that in the final masterplan document, there will be an explanation of the consultation, and how the final plan responded to its findings.	
Other?	N/A	

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Final Reflections: Where applicable, please also respond to the following questions:

- How did you conduct community outreach (digital and/or in person)? What approach, including timelines, budget, and tools were adopted?

See above, particularly "recruiting community steering group".

- Looking back at this project, was there additional guidance or support from DLUHC or other stakeholders that would have been helpful to work through these and other stages of delivery?

No, the guidance throughout the process has been very helpful.

- What was the primary reason you chose your particular PropTech supplier?

The primary reason was that they responded best to the brief.

- Were there any wider surprises which surfaced through undertaking the project?

No major surprises.

3.0 Pilot Outcomes

- **Proposed Outcomes:** What outcomes were you aiming to achieve? To what extent were these achieved? What were the main outcomes (quantitative and qualitative) of your project? **(Please use the attached spreadsheet to detail this further).**

  See spreadsheet

- **Baseline data:** what existing data did you use to compare your project's outcomes to? Did you review or change this approach at any point? How does your baseline data compare with the outcomes achieved in your Round 2 PropTech project?

  Existing data on previous consultations was sparse. However, three comparable consultations were found with response rates. Overall, the results from this consultation surpassed these.

- **Measurement challenges:** how did you measure the impact of your outcomes? Did you have any challenges assessing the impact of your project? If so, in what ways?

- **Demographics:** (if applicable) how did you collect demographic data as part of your consultation? If so, please share any demographic breakdown of consultation respondents (e.g. age, gender etc). How does the demographic of your PropTech funded consultation compare with previous consultation responses?

  We collected demographic data by asking questions in the consultation. See appendices for summary.

- **Cost effectiveness**: did a digital engagement approach save time or resources compared with traditional engagement approaches? If so, how was this measured?

  Taking number of responses as a measure there is evidence to suggest that this project was more cost and resource effective than previous consultations done by the council. The main comparison we have made is with our previous corporate consultation (Future 40) which was a council wide project with a consultation open for 5 months and did not achieve as many responses. Unfortunately, no financial information is available to compare costs.

4.0 Community Feedback

- **Summary of community consultation:** what was the focus for engagement and what questions were asked? How were these questions decided? Were there any surprises (either in responses and/or who responded)?

  Please refer to "approach" above.

- **Summary of community responses:** what were the key themes and learnings from the consultation?

- Please see appendices for consultation feedback

- **Delivering on feedback:** how has the community feedback shaped the project delivery plans? How has this validated, challenged, evolved key assumptions and potential project outcomes?

  The findings are being incorporated into the master planning process which, at the time of writing, our planning consultant is still working on.

- **Community testimonials**: If available, we would love to see any direct testimonials from community members about their experiences on the project in their own words. We would appreciate it if any testimonials could be attributed to specific individuals or local groups, but quotes can be kept anonymous if preferred (please state if this is the case).

5.0 Conclusions and Policy Reflections

- If you could re-start this project what, if anything, would you do differently?

We would think more carefully about the reason for undertaking the consultation – are we asking residents what they think so that we can inform future proposals, or are we showing them pre-conceived ideas for feedback. This is at the core of shaping the consultation.

We would have given more time to "testing" the product. The testing process we did was very useful and had a secondary effect of "teeing up" community groups for the consultation launch. However, an in-person group (perhaps facilitated by a third party) would have added value to this process.

We would have given ourselves more time to research different products and would dig deeper into the answers we were given by suppliers about capabilities, particularly around analysis. We would also have taken more time to map out what we wanted from the consultation (although, still maintain that what some suppliers may be able to provide could shape the answer to that question, so it's important to keep an open mind).

We would have made sure that the age ranges that people could select were more comparable with age breakdowns of previous consultations.

Understanding more about in app advertising, there is very likely to be a cost saving to be had by doing that ourselves or through our communications team.

- What longer-term changes, if any, do you expect to make as a result of this pilot?

We now have a year's licence for placebuilder, which may help us do our draft local plan consultation differently.

Whilst transitioning to a more digital way of doing business is in the council's corporate plans, we have been able to demonstrate a tangible improvement with this project. Therefore there is more corporate recognition of doing things this was which may impact on other services.

We have aligned more with our communication teams as a result of the project. It's likely that the planning team will take more ownership of communications work in planning consultations.

- What (if any) other stakeholders (outside of those who responded to consultations) do you think should be involved alongside LPAs to support long term adoption of digital planning?

The development community would be a valuable group to be engaged.

Please use this space to include any quotes from your team about your project. Don't forget to attribute the quote so it is clear whose perspective you are sharing (e.g. 'project team member or 'supplier' etc).

"Placebuilder undoubtedly added value to our consultation process. We were able to demonstrate that we had vastly improved our response rate compared with previous consultations, which was due to a combination of a well designed interface, supportive consultant team and clever social media advertising. We were also able to engage a more representative sample of the population. The platform is definitely a step in the right direction when it comes to making planning more accessible."

- EEBC project team member

6.0   Additional reflections and feedback for DLUHC (optional)
This is a space for you to provide any additional reflections or feedback for the DLUHC team that you prefer not to be published publicly.

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Thank you for the opportunity. It was a good learning experience for the council.