



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

Final Report

October 2022



Local Planning Authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Date Report Submitted	28 October 2022



PropTech Engagement Fund - Round 2 **Executive Summary**

Region	London & South East
LA Rural-Urban Classification Category	Major Urban - 1
Project summary	Procuring and testing an online digital engagement platform to simplify Waltham Forest's approach to citizen engagement and improve demographic outreach, particularly with younger communities and those less likely to engage. The platform was piloted for two existing strategic regeneration projects in Lea Bridge and Walthamstow.
Funding allocated	£71,500
Supplier(s) Appointed	Granicus - Engagement HQ Software
Consultation Topic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public realm improvements / 15 Minute Neighbourhood regeneration aspirations • Play spaces for young people • Heritage and culture
Consultation Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater percentage of young people engaged through the Lea Bridge pilot projects with approach to be replicated in the future • A greater percentage of those from ethnic minority groups engaged through the Lea Bridge pilot projects with approach to be replicated in the future • Success of pilot resulting in plans to test the platform's use more corporately as a part of the Council's Communications Citizen's Panel of 75 residents with a view to expanding more widely internally
Consultation dates	<p>Lea Bridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Lea Bridge Area Framework and Let's Talk Lea Bridge platform and engagement on public realm improvements: July – September 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In Person events – July 2022 ○ Digital/comms campaign July – September 2022 • Engagement workshops on Play spaces for young people - October 2022 & November 2022 <p>Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Let's Talk Walthamstow platform: October 2022 • Engagement October 2022 onwards



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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.

We piloted a new digital engagement workflow involving Granicus's Engagement HQ Software on two live regeneration projects - the Lea Bridge Area Framework and the Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow. This has been supported by a series of creative in-person engagement events for the two projects. Findings from the pilot have enabled us to evaluate the software for future use across the regeneration team and other Council departments and understand how we can improve outreach, particularly with younger demographics and those less likely to engage.

Let's Talk Lea Bridge: <https://talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/leabridge>

Let's Talk Walthamstow: <https://talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/let-s-talk-walthamstow>

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

Pre-PropTech the regeneration team approached consultation in a variety of ways primarily gathering feedback via online surveys using platforms such as Survey Monkey, Common Place, Microsoft Forms and others. Digital tools have previously been used to support other means of engagement such as street surveys, community workshops and events. However, these survey tools were often standalone, non-standardised and were not well integrated with the existing website or easy to locate. Feedback from in-person events is often captured and recorded anecdotally by officers or sometimes manually copied from a physical paper survey into a digital survey. We have also had feedback from residents around 'survey fatigue' and not being able to easily keep up-to-date with planned change in the area.

- **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.

Piloting Engagement HQ Software has allowed us to assess how digital tools can improve the Council's approach to engagement and bring forward a more robust approach to delivering the Council's 15 Minute Neighbourhood corporate priority.

Below is a summary of the main outcomes of the pilot in Lea Bridge:

- 17% more 18-24 year olds responding online compared to previous engagement in Lea Bridge
- An additional 27 10 –22 year olds engaged via in-person engagement, 70% of these young people have never provided feedback as part of a Council consultation or responded to a Council survey
- Double the percentage of people who identify as Asian/Asian British and



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Black/Black British responding online compared to previous engagement in Lea Bridge

- Overall increased quality of feedback for Lea Bridge projects through online surveys
 - Increased participation from less vocal residents at Lea Bridge drop-in events
 - Reduced officer time to analyse resident feedback used to develop key outcomes from the engagement via use of iPads linking through to the platform and survey at events
 - Reduced officer time when implementing Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow engagement through shared learnings from work in Lea Bridge delivered earlier in the programme
- **Opportunities:** what did the funding allow you to do that you wouldn't have been able to do otherwise?

Proptech funding has unlocked a range of opportunities for the Council's regeneration team, improving workflows and developing new conversations internally as well as with communities on the ground.

The funding has enabled us to:

- Procure and test a new piece of quality, online engagement software - developing a business case for wider roll out across other Council departments
- Develop new, innovative workflows – integrating digital tools with in-person activities and a series of creative engagement events
- Widen the conversation internally – making contact with new teams across the Council that we had never previously engaged. Unifying around a shared desire to improve digital outreach and communications
- Work with specialists – procure specialist consultants to improve the quality of engagement and target audiences we couldn't easily reach by ourselves - Demonstrate delivery to residents building trust and transparency – support to be able to engage on projects set out and prioritised by local people in the Lea Bridge Area Framework establishing loops of listening and feeding back
- Improve our communication with the public about the potential benefits of development in a key area of growth, setting up a coordinated and transparent tailored platform and reaching to less engaged groups in the community
- Initiate early engagement to inform the design phase of the WCulture and Creativity in Walthamstow, involving the community at an earlier stage in decision making, starting the co-creation process and developing community buy-in.
- Provide a one-stop online platform for next phases of the project and future engagement initiatives in Walthamstow, keeping people informed and providing opportunities for continuous feedback and participation through a variety of engagement tools and supporting more traditional engagement methods



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?**

Lea Bridge

Workshops and one-to-one meetings

We invited key community and business stakeholders located close to or with an interest in Markhouse Corner to a collaborative workshop. This included a presentation from the design team as well as a walk and talk around the three key design areas. This provided an opportunity to gather more detailed feedback and for the representatives to ask questions.

We also contacted a number of local community groups to spread the word among their networks and set up focused meetings with some of these organisations. It was very important that we sought to include a diverse range of voices as part of this process.

We held two workshops with students at a local secondary school to understand how play facilities in the area might be improved, how existing play provision could be better promoted in the area, and what young people would like to see locally. Creative methods like model and collage making were used in the workshop sessions alongside use of the platform's ideas tool for mind mapping.

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Figure 1: Photographs from in-person Markhouse Corner and student play workshops

Door knocking and flyering

Door knocking was used as a tool to engage with residents at Barker House. Officers and the design team knocked on doors in the building to chat residents through a pack of information on the potential design ideas for Barker House's front garden space. In addition, door knocking and flyering took place locally to raise awareness of the wider Lea Bridge Area Framework and engagement on improvements to Markhouse Corner.

[PropTech Engagement Fund - Round 2](#)

We worked with the Council's Streetbase Team to go out in the Lea Bridge area and speak to young people on the ground about the project. Streetbase is a group of trained local young people who engage with other young people to seek their views on a range of topics. This included asking them to fill in a survey to gather their important feedback on the potential design ideas and how the area might be improved.

Social Media

We worked with and paid for the time of a local young person to create a Reel for Instagram, which encouraged other young people in Lea Bridge to have their say on improvements to Markhouse Corner and fill in the online survey. You can see the Reel here:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CiAnq86o0Bz/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=#>

Paid for Targeted Ads

We used targeted Facebook and Instagram adverts to specifically promote our survey to

[PropTech Engagement Fund - Round 2](#)

Engagement with businesses



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Businesses in immediate proximity to the three spaces on focus for design improvements were invited to the workshop mentioned above. Whilst not all could attend, we visited 65 businesses in the Markhouse Corner area in person to chat through the proposals and record their feedback.

Businesses were provided with a flyer including a link to the Let's Talk Lea Bridge website where they could find more information on the proposals as well as the online survey to complete.

Public drop-in events

Public drop-in events were held on:

- Saturday 16 July 2022, 12pm – 3pm
- Tuesday 26 July 2022, 4pm – 7pm

Copies of the engagement boards which included early designs were displayed at the event and Council officers were on hand to chat through the ideas. Officers used iPads to complete the online survey with attendees in-person and gather feedback. Attendees were invited to paint their own Markhouse Corner inspired tote bag at the first event. This family friendly activity helped to encourage conversations with individuals who were less likely to typically engage with the Council.

Dr Bike attended the second pop-up event to service local people's bikes, again encouraging conversations with those traditionally less likely to get involved. The Council's Adult Learning Service Digital Inclusion team also attended the event to promote their services as well as chat to people about the Let's Talk Lea Bridge Platform.

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Council communication channels

Communications were sent out through the Council's communications channels to make residents, businesses and other stakeholders aware of the project and invite them to participate.

Online Engagement

Instead of publishing a PDF on the Council's website, we created Let's Talk Lea Bridge, a new digital engagement platform to bring the Lea Bridge Area Framework to life, providing people with an opportunity to shape local projects as they progress. A dedicated Markhouse Corner page was created on the Let's Talk Lea Bridge website. Information on the potential design ideas, drop-in events and project timeline were shared on the page along with an online survey. The survey was promoted widely via:

- Paid for and organic social media posts

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- Council digital newsletters
- Flyers
- Printed tote bags including a QR Code

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Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow

A more detailed engagement plan is currently being developed. The two main audience groups we are considering are the creative sector and the public. For both groups the



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approach is quite similar: combining an extensive digital engagement and outreach with more focused in-person events, strategically tapping into existing Council or local group’s initiatives to reach people where they already are.

The focus for this initial phase then has been around creating a dedicated page for Walthamstow on the new online platform – Let’s Talk Walthamstow – to introduce this project and provide a one-stop channel for the different types of audiences we are hoping to reach. Multiple engagement tools are being tested (map, surveys and ideas tools) and the Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow page is being promoted widely via:

- Paid for and organic social media posts
- Council digital newsletters
- Email outreach
- In-person events

In addition, we have started to list key stakeholders in the area and organised 1:1s interviews, where responses are collected through the online surveys on Let’s Talk Walthamstow webpage. Other creative engagement methods are also going to be tested, involving local young people and providing them also with the opportunity to learn new skills and serve as a conduit between different groups.

- **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?**

DLUHC could better support LPAs through:

- Directing us towards examples of supplier and LPA collaboration best practice from Round 1 projects
- Support and advice on getting the most out of the relationship with our chosen supplier
- Putting us in touch with other LPAs with similar project learnings and outcomes
- Thinking about legacy beyond the timescales of this project and scaling outcomes across other LPAs
- The opportunity for a learning/sharing session on analysing and processing community feedback. There was less time for this towards the end of the project programme.

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

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).**

What outcomes were you aiming to achieve?

Original outcome	Extent outcome was achieved
Design a new area-based workflow for the projects’ digital communications, creating a one-stop channel for internal teams to update on events, news, engagement activities and projects.	Achieved: - Let’s Talk Lea Bridge/ Let’s Talk Walthamstow platforms created: talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/leabridge https://talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/



	let -s-talk-walthamstow
Simplify the approach to digital engagement. Enhancing outreach and ensuring ease of use and best practices in accessibility and inclusion.	<p>Achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A consistent platform used for pilot projects instead of a combination of Survey Monkey, Commonplace, the Council's Website etc. - Internal workshop on accessibility from the Council's digital service - Collaboration with the Council's Digital Inclusion team at the outset of the project
Test the platform's usability with a range of internal and external stakeholders by initially trialling on two live regeneration projects.	<p>Achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tested with input and feedback from internal stakeholders including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data Protection - Communications - Corporate Strategy - Housing - Digital/IT - Tested with feedback from the community including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Businesses representatives - Community group representatives - Secondary school students - Members of the public

What were the main outcomes (quantitative and qualitative) of your project?

In comparison to previous engagement in Lea Bridge, the Let's Talk Lea Bridge platform has been successful in the following ways:

- Overall increased quality of feedback through online surveys
- Increased participation from less vocal residents at drop-in events
- Higher consistency and transparency of communication, improving trust - 17% more 18-24 year olds engaged online
- 27 10 – 22 year olds engaged via additional in-person engagement, 70% of these young people have never provided feedback as part of a Council consultation - Double the percentage of people who would describe their ethnic background as Asian/Asian British engaged via the platform
- Over double the percentage of people who would describe their ethnic background as Black/African/ Black British/ Caribbean via the platform
- Reduced officer time to analyse resident feedback used to develop key outcomes from the engagement via use of iPads linking through to the platform and survey at drop-in engagement events

We aim to continue to use the platform, supported by a programme of in-person initiatives, to help build strong networks and develop a sense of civic pride



locally.

- **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?

Lea Bridge

Existing data from the first two phases of engagement on the Lea Bridge Area Framework was used to compare project outcomes.

A comparison of baseline data with data from the Lea Bridge Round 2 PropTech Project is outlined below:

Measure	Markhouse Corner Consultation (Let's Talk Lea Bridge)	Previous Engagement on the Lea Bridge Area Framework
Visits to engagement platform	3,000 page visits and 1,600 document downloads	602 page visits to Council webpage throughout Phase 2 engagement
Survey responses	233: 206 online survey responses 27 in person responses from young people	267 responses to Phase 2 engagement survey
% of 18-24 year olds to fill in survey	19%	2%
% of people who would describe their ethnic background as Asian/Asian British to fill in survey	11%	4%
% of people who would describe their ethnic background as Black /Black British to fill in survey	12%	5%
% of people who would describe their ethnic background as mixed /multiple ethnic groups	8%	4%



Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow

Project outcomes will be compared to the following existing data sets:

- Responses and demographic data from Borough of Culture 2019 report, Great Places scheme 2019 and Walthamstow Night Time Enterprise Zone pilot project in 2020. - Feedback from Walthamstow High Street ADVENTures 2021 and Walthamstow Business engagement survey conducted in 2021 to collect local businesses' views on the town centre
- We are aiming to increase quantity of people actively engaging with the project, increase diversity and representative engagement with a focus on groups less engaged in previous Council's initiatives, or that we identified as critical in ensuring a diverse range of responses. These groups include young people aged 16-29 (who were under represented in responses to engagement for the Great Places Scheme 2019), people with physical or learning disabilities (only 5% of audience members of Borough of Culture 2019 initiatives identified themselves as having a disability or long-term limiting illness), people that would describe their ethnic background as mixed/multiple ethnic groups and representatives of the LGBTQI+ community. We aim to develop a positive sentiment towards this initiative, build trust and create interest among residents and local groups to participate in future phases.

- **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?

- Quantitative outcomes like reaching more young people or those from seldom heard groups were measured against baseline data from previous engagement. - Responses to the online survey were used as the measure, meaning that the comparison does not necessarily capture in person outreach and those we engaged via door knocking, one-to-one meetings and workshops.
- It has been a challenge to measure cost effectiveness of the project against baseline data. With hindsight we would have thought more carefully about the approach to this at project inception.

- **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?

- Demographic data was collected in line with UK GDPR requirements with support from the Council's Data Protection team. All demographic data collected was optional. - In Lea Bridge demographic data was collected via a section at the end of the survey on improvements to Markhouse Corner. This included:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Relationship with Lea Bridge

- Please see the baseline data section above for a comparison of this data - In Walthamstow both online surveys, one for the general public and the other tailored for the creative sector, include a section asking for demographic information. This includes:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Socio-economic background
- Parental status
- Relationship with Walthamstow

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

- Whilst we do not have a quantitative measure for cost effectiveness, digital engagement helped to save time and resource in the following way:

- Use of iPads at pop-up events to collect feedback via the platform, reducing time to input answers manually
- Use of platform tools at in-person workshop events to collect feedback from participants, reducing officer time to write up feedback
- Whilst it is felt that setting up and piloting the platform for Lea Bridge increased officer time to plan processes and work through internal sign offs, officer time has been significantly reduced in the inception stages of the Culture and Creativity in Walthamstow project through learnings from the Lea Bridge team

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)?

What was the focus for engagement? How were these questions decided?

Lea Bridge



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Over the past year Waltham Forest Council have been engaging on the Lea Bridge Area Framework working with local residents, businesses, and community groups to identify potential projects that could realise the benefits of development and investment in the area. Instead of publishing a stand-alone document on the Council's website, that could quickly become outdated, we have created Let's Talk Lea Bridge, a new digital engagement platform to bring the Lea Bridge Area Framework to life, providing people with an opportunity to shape local projects as they progress and stayed informed about plans in the area. The platform sits at the heart of a wider programme of engagement in Lea Bridge.

The focus of this work was to engage on the first two projects identified through the wider Lea Bridge Area Framework which are listed below:

- Engagement on public realm improvements to Markhouse Corner in Lea Bridge -
 - Questions focussed on understanding the experiences of residents and businesses of existing spaces and rating potential design improvements. The survey tool on the platform was used as a part of the online campaign as well as at in-person workshops and events.
 - We worked with our appointed design team and other internal departments, such as Parks and Highways to understand what could be meaningfully influenced by local people as a part of the engagement process, developing corresponding questions.

- Engagement with local young people to help identify a set of interventions that respond to Lea Bridge's play needs.
 - Students were asked to think about how play facilities in the area might be improved, how existing play provision could be better promoted in the area, and what young people would like to see locally. Creative methods like model and collage making were used in the workshop sessions alongside use of the platform's ideas tool for mind mapping.
 - The approach was informed by previous engagement with students in the area to develop a set of clear outcomes that would help progress the Council's thinking around play in the area. We wanted the students to have a key role in shaping the brief for what play for young people aged 11+ should look like in the area.



5.0 Conclusions and Policy Reflections

- If you could re-start this project what, if anything, would you do differently? -
Re-thinking the approach to user research and collecting feedback on the platform from residents. Rather than collecting responses via survey we would have created more opportunities for collecting data via observing participants use the platform. -
Closer working with the platform supplier on inputting into the engagement strategy to get the most out of using the platform tools and data analysis

- What longer-term changes, if any, do you expect to make as a result of this pilot?
- Success and positive outcomes in Lea Bridge has resulted in plans to pilot the platform's use more corporately as a part of the Council's Communications Citizen's Panel of 75 residents with a view to trialling more widely internally - The platform will continue to be used by the Lea Bridge and Walthamstow Area Regeneration teams with a view rolling out across other regeneration delivery areas (subject to internal continued funding of the platform)
- Success in approach to working with a local young person to create social media content considered being replicated across other projects.

- 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?
- Landowners, developers and their agents could work closer with LPAs to collaborate on the communication of proposals and new schemes they are putting forward

- Policy reflections:
 - Did any existing planning policies limit your ability to achieve your goals for this project?
- No
 - Where do you think further guidance is required, either for local authorities and the wider Proptech sector?
- Pushing for greater innovation and thinking about digital engagement beyond the use of an online platform, digital survey and a one size fits all approach - The use of digital tools for in-person engagement
- Greater focus on outcomes and greater support on how to achieve these ○
How could DLUHC better support LPAs in the future with the further adoption of digital citizen engagement tools, best practice guidance, or other support? -
Support and advice on getting the most out of collaboration with digital supplies -
Creating connections between LPAs
- Case studies and best practice on a hybrid engagement approach ○ If additional funding was available - what do you think future Proptech Fund rounds should focus on delivering / achieving?
- Greater emphasis on a hybrid approach to engagement and developing the use of tools that can be used in an in-person context
- Greater emphasis on digital inclusion and reaching older people or those who are more digitally excluded as a measure of success
- Improving analysis and reporting tools



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).

- It seems clear that a hybrid approach combining in-person engagement, physical or tangible prompts, and digital tools is a potentially very successful model. It feels like digital tools and formats explicitly designed for in-person engagement could be very helpful in future engagement – Specialist Consultant
- The PropTech project was an informative trial in working one of the Council's young advisors to create social media content. They brought a unique and fresh skillset and approach in helping us create engaging content. The partnership saw great results and showed we could definitely do more of this type of work – the Council's Communications Team