



# **Collaboration as critical infrastructure: National foundations and local impact**

**Tom Smith**

**Director AI**

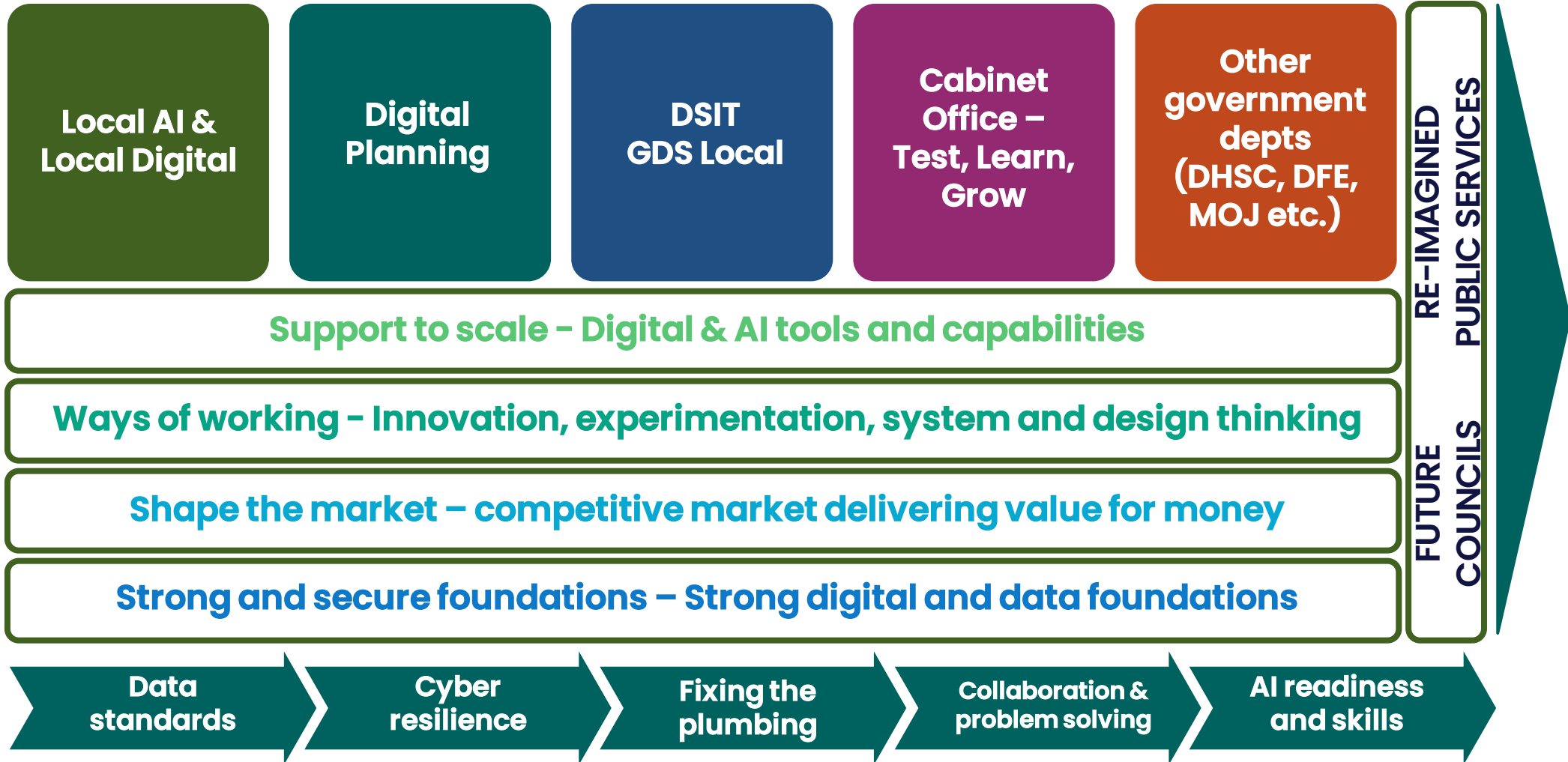
**Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government**

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**9<sup>th</sup> June 2026**



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



**“Artificial Intelligence is the defining opportunity of our generation, and core to delivering the government’s missions”**

Prime Minister, AI Opportunities Action Plan: government response



# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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## Council slashes translation costs with machine learning

06 July 2023  
by Sarah Wray

Swindon Council in the UK deployed a machine learning solution which cut content translation costs from £160 (US\$203) per document to just 7p and reduced turnaround time from weeks to minutes.

The code for the system has been made available as open source to benefit other local governments.

The initiative came out of a request from the council's Paediatric Therapy Service. Swindon has a population of 230,000 and around 100 languages are spoken across the borough. In 2021, the Paediatric Therapy Service had around 400 documents translated, costing on average £160 each and taking up to 16 days. This included internal preparation and sending files to an external translation service.

Swindon's Emerging Technologies team undertook a market assessment to find a solution that would translate content faster and cheaper, including local bilingual speakers in the process. They selected Amazon Web Services (AWS).

Translation costs cut by 99.6%

Swindon Council



Laying the foundations for better local public services

Local Digital > Exploring how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can reduce the time taken to summarise and report on consultation feedback

## Exploring how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can reduce the time taken to summarise and report on consultation feedback

Back to Digital Planning Programme Case Studies

### Challenge

West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Councils piloted moving Local Plan consultations to new digital platforms as part of Round 1 and 2 PropTech Innovation funding. Multiple benefits were delivered including higher levels of participation and enhanced ease of use for both citizens and officers. However, this growth in citizen engagement led to new challenges with managing and summarising the increase in responses.

### Approach

Both Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) were in the process of updating their Local Plans and used £280,000 PropTech Innovation funding to explore whether Artificial Intelligence (AI) could tackle some of the lengthy back-office processes involved with summarising the increased volume of citizen feedback.

Estimated 85% reduction in time spent on admin tasks for planning officers

West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Councils

UKAuthority  
Digital, data & technology for the public good

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## Local authorities run trials of Minute AI tool



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## Council taking part in government AI trial



## Peterborough City Council: Hey Geraldine, a personalised AI assistant

Peterborough City Council has developed an innovative artificial intelligence (AI) assistant, 'Hey Geraldine', designed to support social workers and social care staff.

Cyber | 18 Dec 2024

### Background

Governance  
Stakeholder engagement and feedback  
Initial impact of Hey Geraldine

### Background

Peterborough City Council has developed an innovative AI assistant, 'Hey Geraldine', designed to support social workers and social care staff. The tool is based on a real member of staff within the social care team, Geraldine, with over 30 years of experience. She offers valuable insights and advice to staff drawing upon vast experience and expertise.

The idea for Hey Geraldine stemmed from the frequent requests social work teams made to the real Geraldine for guidance and support. By leveraging AI, the council has created a virtual assistant that can provide instant access to knowledge and information, improving efficiency and decision making. By basing the AI on a real person, the council has significantly increased user adoption. This approach has made it easier for the council to introduce the tool and gain buy-in from staff.

The council initially explored commercial AI solutions but had concerns about data privacy and the ability to address local nuances. To overcome these challenges, they developed Hey Geraldine, a bespoke AI tool.

By 26/27: £680k annual saving replacing traditional telephony with Gen AI-enabled Interactive Voice Response

Bristol Council – Productivity Plan



Home | News | Kingston Council launches AI tool to free up time for frontline social workers

## Kingston Council launches AI tool to free up time for frontline social workers

A new AI tool that saves each frontline social worker at least 4 hours a week by taking admin intensive tasks off their hands is being rolled out by Kingston Council.

The tool is being made available to the council's social work and occupational therapist practitioners, as it embraces digital technology to support its workforce across the borough.

Called Magic Notes, it is designed and tailored specifically for their work. Early signs are showing that it is saving them up to four hours a week on administrative tasks.



Magic Notes helps social workers make the most of their time with clients, knowing all the information that will be created for them

Average time savings of 50-60%

Kingston Council

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# **Harness the power of AI for the public good**

**A six-point plan for public sector digital reform**

**A blueprint for modern digital government (Jan 2025)**

# Local AI

## Our approach

### 1. Scalable Solutions

Deploy a suite of AI tools

- Scope and design with local partners
- Build once at the centre
- Amplify, derisk and scale locally-developed AI tools

### 2. Critical Foundations

Maximise engagement, uptake and trust

- Improve data quality & availability
- Ensure AI is safe, reliable & secure
- Support a more competitive market

# Transcription is a common component

But adoption is fragmented, there is duplicative spend across councils exploring and assuring similar tools and a risk of vendor lock-in in a rapidly developing market.

# Local Transcribe – helping council officers spend more time with the people they are helping, and less time on admin

- Simplifies note-taking for high-demand frontline services.
- Housing officers record conversations, then Local Transcribe generates accurate transcripts and standardised summaries which officers can review and upload.
- Local Transcribe is being piloted with 500 council officers in housing and homelessness services

The screenshot displays the 'GOV.UK' interface for 'Local Transcribe'. The page title is '29/04/2026' and it shows 'Recording information'. A 'Create output' button is visible. Below this, there is a 'Transcript' section with a 'View/edit speaker names', 'Copy', and 'Download' menu. A progress bar shows '0:00 / 41:16'. The transcript content is as follows:

**Iniya:** Hi Gregor, thanks for coming in today. My name is Iniya Sandhu, I'm one of the housing officers here. Before we get started, I just need to take a few monitoring details from you. Can I take your nationality and ethnicity?

**Gregor:** Yeah, sure. I'm British — White Scottish.

**Iniya:** And your current employment status?

**Gregor:** I'm unemployed at the moment. Been out of work for about four months.

**Iniya:** Are you receiving any benefits currently?

**Gregor:** Yes, Universal Credit. I applied when I lost my job.

**Iniya:** Any language or literacy needs I should be aware of, or any cultural or religious needs?

**Gregor:** No, none of those.

**Iniya:** And sexual orientation — you don't have to answer if you'd prefer not to.

**Gregor:** Heterosexual, that's fine.

**Iniya:** Great, thank you. So Gregor, how are you feeling today and what are you hoping to get from this meeting?

**Gregor:** Honestly, I'm pretty stressed. I got a letter last week from my landlord saying he wants me out within two months. I don't really know what my rights are or what I should do next. I'm hoping you can help me figure out what options I've got.

**Iniya:** I'm sorry to hear that, that must be a very worrying situation. Can you tell me a bit about the



**Improve cyber resilience** of the local government sector

**Use digital transformation** with councils to deliver better services and increase their productivity



# Local digital and cyber support for councils

## LGR Digital and Cyber Playbook

Supporting councils to plan and deliver the digital, data, technology and cyber elements of reorganisation

## Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)

Continuously assess and improve cyber resilience. Improve understanding and managing of cyber risk

## Cyber Incident Response and intelligence sharing

Supporting councils to respond to and recover from cyber incidents

# GOV·UK Extract planning data

Beta This is a new service. Help us improve it and [give your feedback \(opens in new tab\)](#).

## Welcome to Extract

### Convert historical planning documents into structured data.

If you work for an LPA, you should have access with your gov.uk email address. Once you try to log in, you'll be sent a sign-in code by email if you have access.

If you do not have access, please contact us at [extract@communities.gov.uk](mailto:extract@communities.gov.uk) to be added to the list. Watch the introductory video to learn more about how Extract can help you digitise your documents.

The path to faster planning records starts with better data.

Digitise your records today.

[Sign in](#) [Go to the user guide](#)

**Extract - Introductory Video**

Extract planning data Zones (9)

▼ The St Albans City and District Council Tree Preservation Order No 1749 28 March 2017, Five Acres Country Club, Five Acres Avenue, Bricklet Wood For review

Reference: TPO-SFRGSH

Name: The St Albans City and District Council Tree Preserv

Made Date: 28/03/2017

Confirmed Date: 27/07/2017

Entry Date: 15/05/2026

Start Date: 28/03/2017

End Date: dd/mm/yyyy

Notes:

[Mark as complete](#)

[Export all data](#)

Watch on YouTube

# Digital Planning & PropTech support Delivering benefits across plan-making

Planning process

Example PropTech Solutions

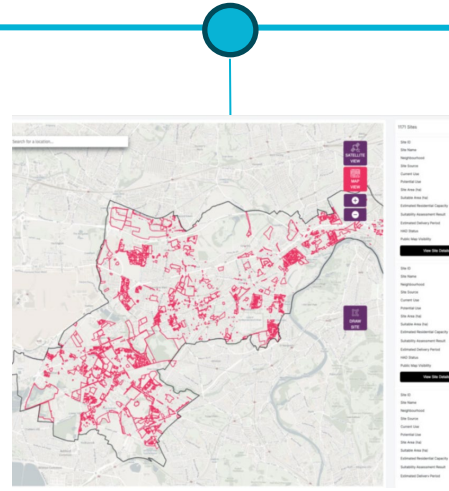
PropTech impact

## Plan-making



**4-6 month reduction in Local Plan timeline** including over 200 weeks of planning officer time savings

## Site Identification & Assembly



**95% reduction in time to assess new sites** (from 2 hours to 20 minutes per site)

**£11k license for tech to assess all sites vs. £120k consultant fee** paid by LPA for 6 months work

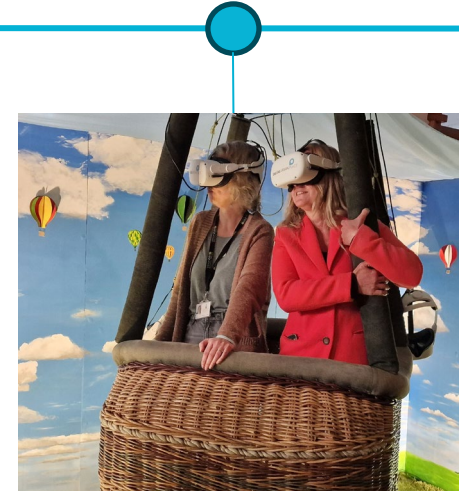
## Viability & Feasibility Assessment



**2-3 x increase in number of homes built on small sites** within the Plan Period

Able to identify and analyse **191x as many plots of land** using PropTech

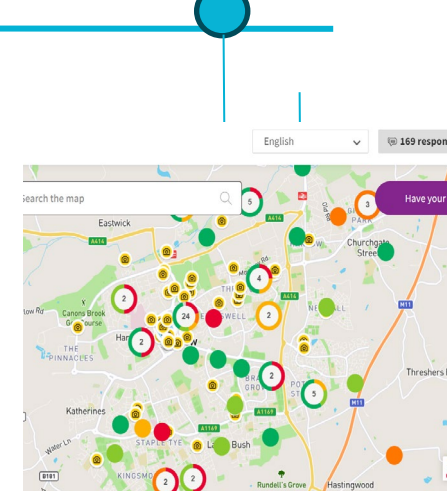
## Public Consultations



**300% increase in community responses to consultation**

**37% increase in positive sentiment** for new development proposed

## Monitoring



**Reduced time and cost burden** for ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements like biodiversity net gain

Nottingham's Digital Twin **saved £55k per year**



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**Director AI**

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