Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

[redacted]

10 November 2026

Dear [redacted],

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) - IR2026/26656

1. Thank you for your request for an internal review of the Department's response to FOI2026/21929, received on 3 September 2026.

2. I conducted the review independently and had no involvement in the original response.

Background

3. On 5 August 2026 you requested the following information:

'Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide the following information relating to the Augmented Planning Decisions programme (the AI planning trial operating in Barnet, Camden and Dorset):

1. The success criteria, evaluation framework, or key performance indicators against which the programme is being assessed, as held at the date of this request.

2. Any baseline measurement of planning decision times for the trial authorities recorded before or at the start of the trial, including the methodology used to calculate it.

3. The criteria to be applied in deciding whether to extend the programme to additional local planning authorities.

If any part of this request would exceed the cost limit under section 12, please advise which part and provide the remainder.

If you require clarification, I would be grateful for advice and assistance under section 16'.

4. The Department responded on 3 September 2026. It applied section 21 of FOIA to parts (1) and (3), referring you to published tender and contract documents. For part (2), it confirmed that it had not collected the requested baseline measurements and directed you to published planning statistics.

Request for review

5. On 3 September 2026 you requested an internal review of the handling of your request, raising the following points:

‘I am writing to request an internal review of the response to FOI2026/21929, dated 3 September 2026, in respect of part (3) and part (1).
Part (3) asked for the criteria to be applied in deciding whether to extend the programme to additional local planning authorities. The response applied section 21 and referred me to Schedules 2, 3 and 4 of the published contract. I have read those schedules. Schedule 2 Part F (Implementation and Scale-Out) sets out implementation deliverables (run-book, onboarding pack, as-built documentation, call-off services) and contains no criteria for deciding whether to extend. Schedule 3 is the charges schedule. Schedule 4 is the supplier's tender. Schedule 4 does state that the project should only move from Alpha to Beta with a signed Satisfaction Certificate and cross-refers to Schedule 8. Schedule 8, which was not among the schedules cited in your response to part (3), contains Milestone 10, the explicit decision milestone for moving to the Beta & Scale Phase, described as a decision "having demonstrated that alpha build meet user needs and all major risks are assessed", with "Backlog fully populated" as its acceptance criterion. Section 21 applies only where the information requested is in fact reasonably accessible. I would be grateful if the review would either identify where in the published documentation the criteria for extending the programme to additional authorities are set out, or confirm that the department holds no such criteria.
Part (1) asked for the success criteria, evaluation framework or key performance indicators "as held at the date of this request" (5 August 2026). The response referred me to the published contract. The contract itself provides that "Defined success criteria, performance metrics, and Alpha test plan" are to be established by Milestone 4, scheduled for the end of elapsed week six under the baselined plan (Schedule 8), and that "the specific metrics used to evaluate the Solution's effectiveness" are to be "documented in the relevant SoWs" (Schedule 4, page 40). I have not been able to locate those documents in the published contract material to which the response directed me. I would be grateful if the review would either identify where they are reasonably accessible or confirm whether, at 5 August 2026, the department held the Milestone 4 records, any Statement of Work containing evaluation metrics, or any other evaluation framework or success criteria for the pilot beyond the published contract, and if so, reconsider their disclosure’.

Review Officer’s Response

6. I have considered the original response, your representations and the further information obtained from the programme team. I do not uphold the response in full. Although relevant information for Part (1) was available in the published contract, the response did not identify it accurately or clearly distinguish that information from records not held at the date of your request.

Part (1): success criteria, evaluation framework or key performance indicators

7. Section 21 applies only to information that was reasonably accessible by other means. The published contract described the intended approach and provided for success criteria, performance metrics and an Alpha test plan to be developed through Milestone 4, with

specific evaluation metrics to be documented in the relevant Statement of Work.

8. At the time of your request, the Department held no separate completed evaluation framework or success criteria beyond the published contract.

9. We did hold an Alpha Statement of work and Quality Plan with success criteria for completing Alpha (these were essentially a more detailed version of the success criteria for meeting the milestones set out in schedule 8 of the contract); however that information has already been considered for disclosure in response to your separate FOI (FOI2026/26309) and is not in scope of this request.

9. I therefore partially uphold this aspect of your request for review. The contract information was reasonably accessible, but the response did not clearly explain the position regarding the further records you identified.

Part (3): criteria for extension to additional local planning authorities

10. The original response referred you to Schedules 2, 3 and 4 of the published contract. It should also have referred you to Schedule 8, Milestone 10, which sets out the requirements for progression to the Beta & Scale phase.

11. The programme team has confirmed that these requirements also apply when considering whether to extend the programme to additional local planning authorities.

12. I uphold the application of section 21 to this information. However, the original response should have identified Schedule 8, Milestone 10, and explained its relevance to considering whether to extend the programme to additional local planning authorities. I therefore partially uphold this aspect of your complaint in relation to the explanation provided.

Conclusion

13. Your complaint is partially upheld in relation to parts (1) and (3). Section 21 applied to the relevant published information, but the original response should have clarified what further records were not held and identified the provisions relevant to extension.

Yours sincerely,

MHCLG FOIA Team

Complaints procedure

If you are unhappy with the outcome of this internal review, you can ask the independent Information Commissioner to investigate. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via their online form at ico.org.uk/concerns or call them on 0303 123 1113.