



Taking the puzzle out of a development jigsaw

This issue coincides with the recent submission of one of the most impressive planning applications in UK history; an application that has taken four years, tremendous team work and an unwavering focus to come to fruition.

Back in 2002, Brent Cross and Cricklewood was identified as an 'Opportunity Area' in the Lord Mayor of London's 'London Plan'. A year later, London Borough of Barnet Council and the Greater London Authority took the first steps towards a massive regeneration programme, tasking a consortium of partners to create a 'new gateway for London and a vibrant urban area in Barnet'. The consortium, the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners, took the bull by the horns and began work.

The project is immense, involving the creation of a new town centre, 7,500 new homes, a transformed Brent Cross shopping centre, parks, open spaces, community facilities, schools, a bus station and Midland Mainline train station along with industrial and commercial units over 250 acres. It is the largest investment in transport infrastructure and community facilities in the area's history.

In geographic terms, the development is bordered by Brent Cross shopping centre to the north with the A41 (Hendon Way) to the east, Cricklewood Lane to the south and the Edgware Road (A5) to the west and it is dissected by the A406, the North Circular.

International property development heavyweights

The Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners comprises some of the major players in international property development: Hammerson Plc is the leading European property company with operations in the UK, France and Germany. It recently completed Birmingham's multi award-winning new Bullring and with fellow partner, Standard Life Investments UK, is one of the owners of Brent Cross shopping centre.

Standard Life Investments UK is one of Europe's largest property investors and the third member of the consortium, Multiplex Group, currently has 54 development projects in progress, worth over £6.4 billion.

Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners is turning vision into reality.

Historically, the area has been cursed with poor planning; large retail units are surrounded by vast areas of surface car parking, vacant and unused land, industrial units and low density housing. There are few community facilities and poor landscaping – the open spaces that were created aren't used and there is little sense of community. The plans are set to change all that.

The improvement in open space is one of the most striking aspects of the planning application. Clitterhouse Playing Fields is set to be transformed into one of North London's premier parks, with high-quality leisure facilities to be used by local residents, community groups and schools. Four new parks will be created – Brent Riverside Park is planned adjacent to the waterfront and the River Brent will be re-routed, improvements will be made to water quality and there will be a strong ecological focus. There will be 'green corridors' throughout the development, comprising dedicated, pedestrian walkways and cycle paths linking gardens, facilities and several public squares.

From the project's inception, AIT Spatial Ltd, (AIT), specialists in mapping and systems integration, has been involved with the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners, identifying and resolving existing and potential land ownership difficulties.

Philip Madeley, managing director of the Bedfordshire-based company, explains: “A development of this magnitude will inevitably result in a plethora of CPOs. A clear identification of who owns what is essential for the project’s smooth development – particularly when it comes to staged purchasing in that it can avoid the financial implications of early purchasing decisions; it enables the successful implementation of structured cash-flow management.”

Innovative and cost-effective

The service provided by AIT is both innovative and cost-effective. Known as Terrier Compilation, it allows immediate access to personalised, contemporary and accurate land-ownership data.

It combines the benefits of GIS with the Internet to enable efficient and effective data capture and collation in a digital format. The datasets are then made available by AIT and the company also provides regular data updates to ensure the information is clean, accessible and accurate. Philip comments: “We discovered that confirming land ownership was fraught with difficulties when reliant on hard copy formats. Sourcing information is time-consuming and costly – particularly where there are potential boundary disputes. We use a combination of Ordnance Survey data and Land Registry information so the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners are able to see immediately the development – either as an overall picture or in detail.”

Once the data was collated and provided, AIT ensures the information was easily accessible, Philip says the beauty of the facility is that it may take less than a minute and a few clicks to find an answer to a specific question.

Based around Autodesk Mapguide Enterprise, Terrier Compilation allows users to generate plots for ‘gap’ areas at virtually any scale, including 1:1250 as used by Land Registry and mark them up as necessary. Plots are produced with relevant developer information, scale, date, OS grid reference, Crown Copyright details and summary information. The data is also collated to industry standard formats – Autodesk DWG and MS Access – making it readily exchangeable with other systems such as Bentley, MapInfo, ArcVIEW, MS Excel etc., moreover, there is no need to invest in new computer hardware.

Individually defined parameters

The abundance of mapping options available has meant the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partnership was able to define its own parameters so that the data captured was relevant and what was needed, with key users subsequently trained on the system by Philip and his associate, AIT technical director, Mark Spence.

Terrier Compilation has now been used to provide the residents of Brent Cross and Cricklewood with information on what is happening to their area.

In December 2006, the Partners discussed ways of providing local people with a supply of easily accessible information. Philip explains: "Communicating with local people has always been a top priority for the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners – there were roadshows taken to different locations earlier in the programme – and it became clear that Terrier Compilation could provide an effective, alternative medium that would provide people with immediate access to a whole raft of information in an easy to comprehend format."

Communicating with communities

The service has been adapted to be accessible through local schools, libraries and places of work and incorporating aerial photographs of the development and architects' drawings to show the current status of the development and forthcoming phases. According to Philip Madeley, IT-based communication complements the information being delivered by local press and through community groups.

Jonathan Joseph, development manager of the Brent Cross Cricklewood Development Partners, believes the system has been a financial and logistical advantage, saying: "AIT's compilation of the Land Registry title data has made it easy to view, interrogate and interpret.

"Implementing the Terrier Compilation service has eliminated the bewildering experience of having a series of individual jigsaw pieces without a picture on the box to show us how they fitted together. Now we can see how it all fits and we're able to assess any gaps, overlaps or areas of concern in our land ownership data; we are far more confident working with the information we have."

Case Study – 2007 Brent Cross Cricklewood continued...

An estimated 27,000 jobs will be created thanks to the 20 year Brent Cross Cricklewood development programme.

More information on the Brent Cross Cricklewood development is available on www.brentcrosscricklewood.com and for details on Terrier Compilation, please go to www.aitspatial.co.uk or call 01462 816648.

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*Note: Case Study original released under AIT Spatial Ltd's previous name of 'Allied Integrated Technologies Ltd'
- Company name changed in February 2009 with relocation to Silsoe in Bedfordshire in May 2013.*

