

Moat // a case study on the use of web mapping for housing associations



Moat is a housing association based in Dartford, Kent, serving the south east. It manages around 19,000 properties and creates more than 1,500 affordable home ownership opportunities every year.

The Challenge

Like many other housing associations, Moat is responsible for a spectrum of property types in different localities across a wide geographic area. It has contracts with various suppliers for cleaning services and repairs and maintenance activities, including a requirement to look after communal gardens and green spaces.

Working out where these properties are, how much ground is covered by them and what price should be put on a maintenance contract are considerations most asset managers will recognise.

Traditionally, the geographic aspects of this task were carried out via sketch maps and extracts of paper publications from bodies such as Ordnance Survey. At Moat, property services managers use digital mapping techniques to make the collection of data for contract management more efficient.

According to Chris Ollier, director of property services, the previous use of hand drawn sketch maps was simply becoming too limiting.

“One of the main frustrations was that we were not able to send anything electronically,” he says. “In addition, it was not a sufficiently rigorous process in the event of any query over a contract.”

The Moat managers realised that they needed a systematic, digital solution for building geographically-referenced information on top of accurate base mapping. A key consideration was that the solution should be easy to use by people without prior specialist knowledge of how to manipulate digital map data on screen.

The Solution

After some research, the managers chose an online solution from emapsite to help with a tender pack for procuring both gardening and cleaning contracts. They needed to create an up-to-date batch of maps detailing the precise areas where they are responsible for cleaning and garden maintenance.

The map delivery to Moat consists mainly of OS MasterMap, Ordnance Survey's most detailed and up-to-date digital mapping. It shows the outlines of buildings, green spaces and other geographic features and comes as seamless data so users can choose precisely the areas they require. OS MasterMap is widely used in asset management, planning, site development and environmental consultancy.





Looking forward, Mr Ollier says Moat's improved mapping base will help the association work towards more data sharing, for example with local authorities. He adds:

“There is likely to be much more mainstream use of maps on screen across our departments. We've shown that you don't have to be a GIS specialist to make the best use of mapping.”

emapsite – much more than mapping

emapsite is widely recognised as a leading source of online digital mapping services and location intelligence solutions.

Plans Ahead by emapsite - www.emapsite.com/plansahead provides instant access to detailed mapping and aerial photography online enabling users to interrogate specific sites and understand property detail, access issues, landscape, proximity to, and other issues that impact planning from their desktop.

As well as housing associations such as Moat, Plans Ahead is used by property developers, retailers, insurers, transport analysts and many other business professionals.

emapsite is a Premier partner of the Ordnance Survey. For more information visit www.emapsite.com.

On receipt of the mapping data from emapsite, the Moat managers align it with Land Registry titles to gauge proper boundary lines and geographic extents. CAD operators then convert the maps into AutoCAD format, adding detail on the type of land that needs attending to and the boundaries of responsibility. Relevant features can include grass, trees, bushes, hard-standing structures and so on. All of this is included as a mapping 'catalogue' in the tender packs for each contract.

The maps are also stored in a shared area of Moat's IT system for property and asset management. Surveyors, housing officers and contract administrators have access to this resource for the running of contracts and the resolving of issues that may arise on quality, service and areas of responsibility.

To access the mapping from emapsite, the Moat managers use a simple online log-in. They search on location, choose the type of mapping and output format they require and order for immediate delivery. As well as the data itself, the emapsite solution comes with data sharing rights and failsafe copyright licensing protection.

The Outcome

emapsite has proved to be a great help. Once an account was created the managers were able to quickly search for and purchase any map required for any site that was missing a plan.

Chris Ollier summarises the benefits for Moat:

“For relatively little investment, the web mapping solution from emapsite has helped us significantly. It gives us a useful way of maintaining plans now and for the future. Our mapping is more accurate, our systems are more efficient and there are no disputes with contractors over the tender process. The more information you can put into electronic format the easier it is to use, share and keep up to date.”



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