

# Case Study



## Dorset Council



### Client:

Dorset Council is the local authority for the non-metropolitan county of Dorset in England.

### Industry:

Local Government

### Product:

Aerial Photography  
& Height Data



*“Having Bluesky’s aerial photography available through the APGB service has made a huge difference for us. What used to take ages and a lot of manual effort is now quick, easy, and always up to date. Staff can get the imagery they need straight away, complete with helpful metadata, which makes planning and legal work much easier. It’s also freed up our GIS team to focus on other work instead of constantly managing data.”*

Rob Quincey

GIS Developer at Dorset Council

### Summary:

Dorset Council is using Bluesky’s aerial photography as a core resource for both internal departments and public engagement. The data enables spatial analysis for a wide range of applications, including planning assessments, legal evidence, infrastructure monitoring, public exploration of rights of way and historical land use. The seamless access to Bluesky’s high-resolution photography, made available free-at-point-of-use via the Government’s Digital Services ‘Aerial Photography for Great Britain (APGB) service, means the Council benefits from instant availability and regularly updated coverage.

## Challenge:

Historically, acquiring aerial data involved commissioning bespoke aerial surveys, which often took some time to complete. Once the aerial photography had been captured, the data then needed to be manually processed, stored, and distributed by the Council's GIS Development Team. This was proving both time and resource intensive and could often result in a cycle where, by the time one dataset was distributed, it was time to begin the next.

Managing the data locally also demanded significant storage capacity and technical expertise. Internally, staff unfamiliar with GIS often had to rely on the GIS Development Team for access to the data and support, and externally the public had limited access to spatial data, which restricted their ability to explore rights of way, historical land use, and other local interests. This introduced delays from the GIS Development Team in providing up-to-date photography, and in turn was then problematic for the planning department as currency and accuracy of aerial photography is critical for development checks and legal proceedings.

## Solution:

Access to Bluesky's high-resolution aerial photography via APGB means Dorset Council has eliminated the need for the council to commission bespoke aerial surveys or manage the storage and processing of aerial data in-house. Freed from these operational burdens, the GIS Development Team can now focus their efforts on projects and new innovation.

To make the aerial photography easily accessible to its internal stakeholders, the GIS Development Team integrated Bluesky's aerial photography into the Council's web mapping application via the APGB Web Map Service (WMS). This ensures the photography is instantly available, eliminating the need for manual downloads or local storage. With Bluesky capturing aerial updates on a two-year cyclic basis, the Council benefits from access to the most current data available.

Bluesky's aerial photography, current and historic, also includes flight metadata that records the exact date each photograph was captured. This feature is particularly valuable to the planning department, where staff frequently need to track development progress or provide timestamped evidence in development legal cases. The department can quickly and easily locate photographs by date, rather than going through the GIS Development Team, helping to streamline processes.

The GIS Development Team has also begun testing 3D visualisation capabilities using samples of Bluesky's detailed Digital Terrain Models and Digital Surface Models downloaded from the Mapshop, also available as part of the APGB service.

## Results:

Having access to Bluesky's aerial photography has been transformative for Dorset Council. What was once a slow, resource-heavy process of acquiring, processing, and distributing aerial data is now fast and efficient, saving significant time and money across the Council. The option to seamlessly integrate the APGB WMS into the council's mapping applications has reduced the burden on the

GIS Development Team. The inclusion of the metadata through the service has also enhanced the reliability of the data, making it easier to reference and use as evidence.

Additionally, access to Bluesky's derived datasets such as height data, is helping to expand the council's capabilities, giving the GIS Development Team the opportunity to trial datasets they previously would have to budget for.

	Aerial Photography Specification	DTM Specification
<b>Resolution</b>	<b>12.5cm</b>	<b>5m</b>
<b>Coverage</b>	Great Britain	Great Britain
<b>Accuracy XY</b>	± 30cm rmse	± 1m rmse
<b>Accuracy Z</b>	-	± 1.5m rmse
<b>Formats</b>	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW	Include: ASCII Grid, ASCII XYZ, DXF Point, Geotiff
<b>Standard Projection</b>	British National Grid	British National Grid
<b>Tile Size</b>	1km x 1km (8,000 x 8,000 pixels)	1km x 1km (200 x 200 pixels)
<b>Metadata</b>	Gemini 2.3	Gemini 2.3

Get in touch today at [support@apgb.co.uk](mailto:support@apgb.co.uk)