

Case Study



Chelmsford City Council



Client:

Chelmsford City Council serves as the local government authority for the city of Chelmsford, which is a district with city status in Essex, England.

Industry:

Local Government

Product:

Aerial Photography



“The APGB platform is intuitive and straightforward to use. Navigating between map layers, selecting products, and customising downloads is simple, making it easy to find exactly what you need in just a few clicks.”

Amin Sule,

Data & GIS Lead, Chelmsford City Council

Summary:

Chelmsford City Council is utilising Bluesky's high resolution aerial photography, accessed through the Government Digital Service's Aerial Photography for Great Britain (APGB) resource, within its Planning department to investigate land use issues, verify boundaries, and support adverse possession cases. With instant access to both current and historic photography, planners can assess subtle changes to sites, compare sites across multiple years, and easily cross reference findings with other data sources. This streamlined access to visual data enables the Council to resolve disputes quickly and efficiently, improving the overall speed and confidence of its land management processes.

Challenge:

One recent example from the planning department involved a leased car park where the physical layout had changed over time, leading to confusion around the actual boundary and the extent of alterations.

Access to existing land data proved limited and clearer visuals were required which, in the past, would have meant commissioning bespoke aerial survey flights. As well as being costly this would often involve significant time and work pulling together internal budgets and becoming an administrative burden.

Solution:

Through the Government Digital Service's Aerial Photography for Great Britain (APGB) resource, the Council now has free at-point-of-use access to Bluesky's high resolution aerial photography. Regularly updated and easy to access, the aerial photography is now embedded directly within the Council's internal GIS systems, offering planners seamless access to both the latest photography and an extensive archive of historic photography enabling multi-year comparison.

Time stamped and high resolution aerial photography means planning officers can accurately assess ground conditions and view detail far beyond what map-based datasets can offer. The dated photography also serves as robust evidence and can be easily cross referenced with other data sources to provide an additional level of confidence and accuracy in every day decision making.

In practice, the historic aerial photography enables the Council to revisit past conditions with precision. In the car park boundary case, officers used the archive photography to track how the layout had changed over time helping them to present clear photographic evidence with the issue subsequently resolved quickly.

Results:

The accessibility and ease-of-use of APGB data have delivered significant efficiency gains and cost savings for the Council's planning team. Officers can investigate land use issues instantly within their GIS systems, enabling faster decision making and reducing the administrative burden. Time stamped photography further strengthens the Department's position in adverse possession cases, providing trustworthy visual evidence.

Looking ahead, the Council plans to expand its use of APGB resources by adopting Bluesky's 5 cm ultra-high resolution photography, which will offer even greater detail for complex land related investigations. Officers also aim to explore how other departments across the organisation can benefit from wider access to this geospatial data.

	Imagery Specification	
Resolution	5cm	12.5cm
Coverage	Great Britain	Great Britain
Accuracy XY	± 10cm rmse	± 30cm rmse
Formats	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW
Standard Projection	British National Grid	British National Grid
Tile Size	1km x 1km (20,000 x 20,000 pixels)	1km x 1km (8,000 x 8,000 pixels)
Metadata	Gemini 2.3	Gemini 2.3

Get in touch today at support@apgb.co.uk