# from novice to navigator

STARTING YOUR DIGITAL URBAN PLANNING JOURNEY

**July 2025** 



### what's coming

#### PLANNING IS NO LONGER JUST ABOUT PLACE - IT'S ABOUT PACE!



### **Digital Planning Readiness**

- foundations
- tools
- strategy
- next steps

# why digital, why now

THE SHIFT

Planning is under pressure—housing, climate, infrastructure coordination, 'the great planner shortage'.

Digital is enabling speed, scale and trust.

Digital is a skillset, not a silver bullet. You don't buy it. You built it.

Planners must lead the adoption. This is not happening enough.

### what is it?

#### DIGITAL URBAN PLANNING

### Digital tools used to support planning.

#### Some familiar faces?

- Geographic Information Systems (ArcGIS, QGIS, MapInfo)
- Dashboards (Power BI, Tableau, UrbanFootprint)
- 3D Modelling (Esri CityEngine, SketchUp, Rhino, Unreal Engine)
- Digital Twin Platforms (Bentley iTwin, Azure Digital Twins, Cityzenith, Giraffe)
- Building Information Modelling (Autodesk Revit, Navisworks)
- Scenario Modelling (Envision Tomorrow, UrbanSim, CommunityViz)
- Collaborative Planning (CoUrbanize, Social Pinpoint)

# digital tools FOR ALL USE CASES

### New technologies, new capabilities.

- Archistar: Combines GIS mapping with digitised planning codes
- MyLot: A generative AI planning assistant that offers site-specific guidance
- PropCode: A web-based tool that instantly checks property eligibility
- DAISY: Natural language processing that guides applicants through DA process
- Forecaz: A platform that uses AI to provide accurate urban growth forecasts
- MapAI: A geospatial AI tool with data through natural language queries
- Giraffe: A platform that integrates real-time mapping, modelling, and analytics
- NovoPlan: SaaS platform to streamline infrastructure contribution processes

### don't be fooled by

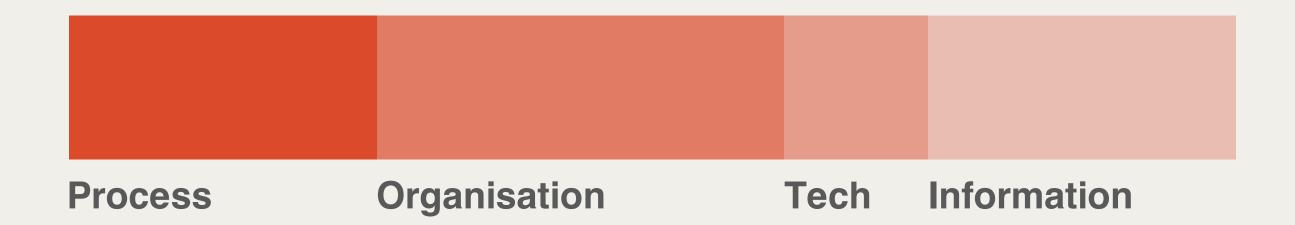
DON'T BE LAZY, PLEASE!

"digital is too complex / it's for IT to deal with / it'll replace planners"

# the opportunity

WHY DIGITAL PROJECTS FAIL

They are treated as digital transformation projects, not business transformation projects...



### to be clear

**SAY IT OUT LOUD** 



"digital planning is about planning transformation, NOT digital transformation"



#### WHY PLANNERS MUST BE DIGITAL LEADERS









**PROCESS** 

ORGANISATION & CULTURE

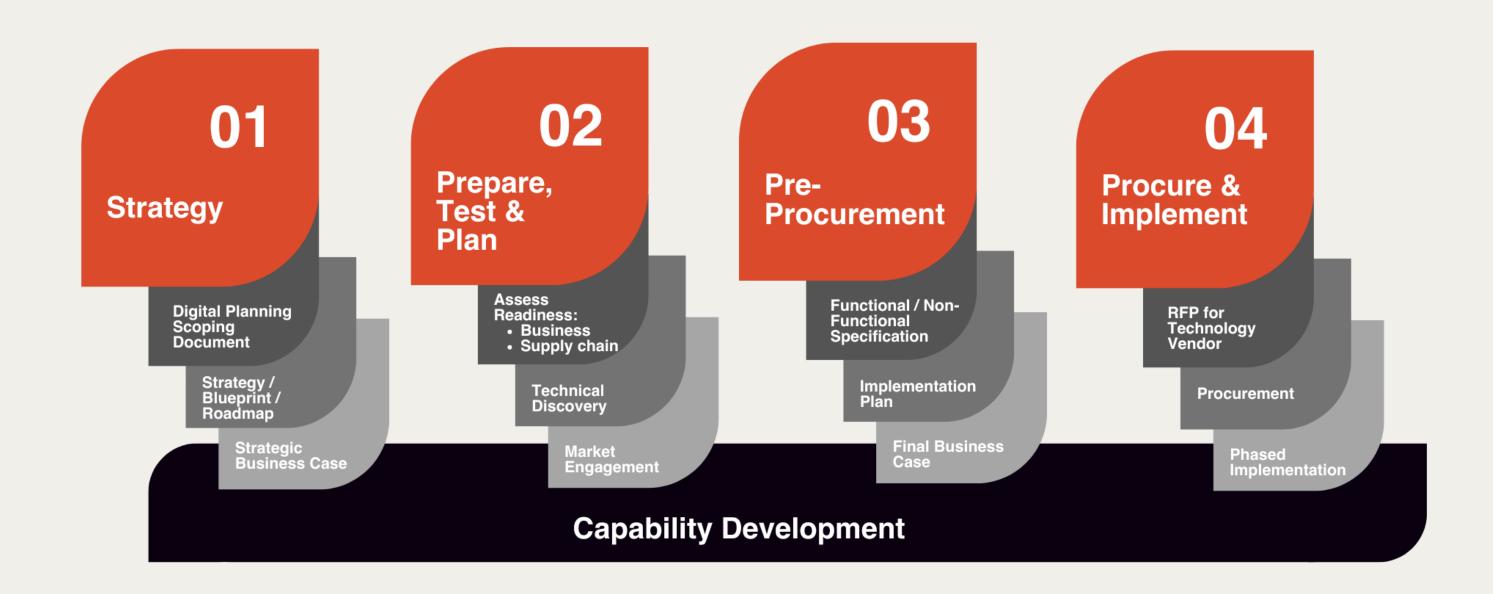
**TECHNOLOGY** 

**INFORMATION** 



# the digital planning journey

#### **BRINGING METHOD TO UNCERTAINTY**



## don't be fooled by

"BUY MY SOLUTION"



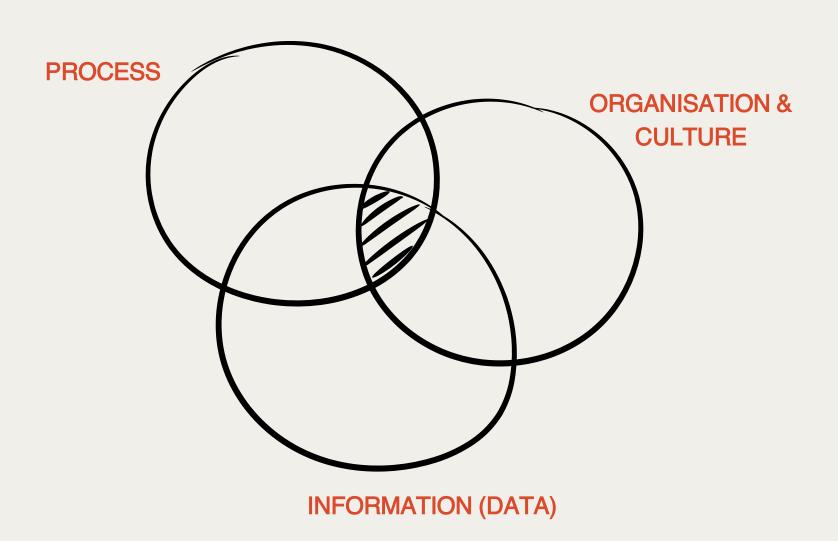
# what's the problem, solution?

THE 'WHY'



### strategy

#### THE ROLE OF STRATEGY - KEEPING DIGITAL 'REAL'

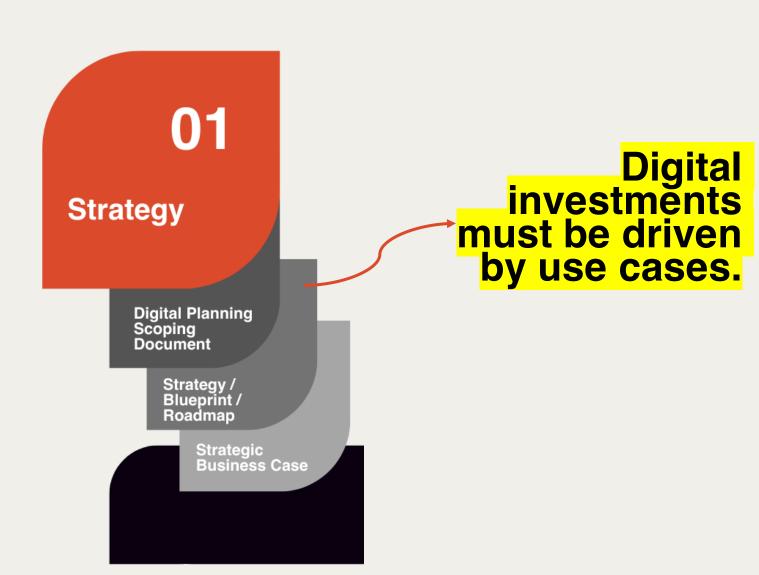


Many technology investments are either ill-defined in terms of their ability to deliver value or deployed with a lack of appreciation for the ongoing operations and maintenance.

It is your job to ensure the right digital strategies and tools are identified, assessed, scoped, procured and deployed in response to the outcomes being sought.

## strategy

#### **KEEPING DIGITAL 'REAL' WITH USE CASES**



#### **DIGITAL PLANNING USE CASE**

#### AI-POWERED CHATBOT FOR PLANNING QUERIES

#### **Problem Statement**

Navigating the complexities of urban planning and development processes can be a daunting task for residents, developers, and professionals alike. From understanding zoning restrictions, lodging development applications, or clarifying compliance requirements, this can often involve extensive manual research or lengthy interactions with time-poor council staff. The result? Frustration. inefficiency, and delays that hinder progress and reduce transparency in the planning system.

Maria, a small business owner, is planning to expand her café by adding an outdoor seating area. She needs to know whether she requires council approval and which permits might be needed. Instead of wading through pages of council documents or waiting in a phone queue for customer service. Maria accesses an Al-powered planning chatbot on her council's website. The chatbot quickly provides her with zoning details, outlines necessary permits, and even highlights submission deadlines. Maria leaves the conversation confident and prepared to move forward with her

- · Accessibility: Provides 24/7 access to critical planning information, reducing dependency on limited council office hours.
- · Efficiency: Speeds up decision-making with instant responses and
- automation of routine tasks like document retrieval or form filling. · Clarity: Simplifies complex planning jargon into user-friendly language,
- improving transparency for non-experts. · Resource Optimisation: Frees up council staff to focus on more complex cases, reducing workloads and improving operational efficiency.
- · Engagement: Enhances community experiences by fostering better understanding of planning policies and fostering collaboration.

#### Process/Functional Requirements

- · Zoning Information Inquiry: The chatbot interprets property details and delivers zoning restrictions or possibilities (e.g., types of developments allowed).
- Permit Guidance: Provides a list of required approvals based on the user's project specifications and location.
- Application Support: Assists users by generating a checklist of required documents, explaining submission processes, and pre-filling forms.
- Compliance Checks: Guides users in reviewing their intended developments against council laws to identify potential issues.
- topics like tree removal policies, noise regulations, and infrastructure contributions.
- Progress Tracking: Offers update notifications on lodged applications, allowing users to check their status in real time

- · Integration: Requires seamless integration with council planning databases, GIS mapping systems, and document repositories.
- Al and NLP: Must leverage advanced machine learning algorithms capable of understanding technical queries and offering contextually accurate responses.
- · User Interface: Needs an intuitive interface for text-based and voice interactions. accessible across web and mobile platforms.
- · Regulatory Updates: Capabilities for regular Community FAQs: Answers common queries about updates to ensure compliance with changing laws, regulations, and policies.
  - · Data Security: Must uphold strict standards for data privacy, particularly for personally identifiable or location-specific information.

By simplifying processes, enhancing accessibility, and streamlining interactions, this solution can support efficient governance and sustainable and inclusive progress.

#### **Effort/Change Considerations**

- Development & Configuration
- Staff Training
- · Change Management
- Testing & Iteration Ongoing Maintenance



Effort of Implementation

### next steps

**BUILD READINESS** 

The journey is ongoing. Set realistic expectations.

Digital doesn't replace planners - it amplifies them.

Your next step? Digital Planning Scoping Paper.

"The best time to start your digital planning journey was yesterday.

The second-best time is now."



**SCAN ME for digital planning resources** 

# thank you

neonurban.com

# NEON.URBAN DIGITAL URBAN PLANNING ADVISORY