



SPECIFICATION

CPD/004/118/117

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (the Authority) has responsibility for national policy on high street and town centre regeneration. As part of the department's work in this area, the Authority is looking to purchase data on vacancy rates in high streets, town centres and other retail centre across England, as well as data on unit openings and closures across the country.
- 1.2 Of particular interest to the Authority is the ability to use this data to understand how different local areas and individual high streets and town centres are performing, as well as being able to track performance over time and understand the *current* performance of areas. This means that data on vacancy rates, openings and closures needs to be provided at a sub-regional level and be as up-to-date as possible.

2 Background

- 2.1 Town centres and high streets play a key role in driving local economic growth. They are a crucial part of our local and regional economies, creating jobs, providing social capital, nurturing small businesses and injecting billions of pounds into our economy. Recent research found that over £2 billion has been invested in the high street between July 2016 and June 2017.
- 2.2 However, many of our town centres and high streets are struggling, as demonstrated by a number of high profile retailers going into administration in recent years. The 2008 financial crisis has had a big impact on high streets - before the crash high streets were experiencing a revival, with many retailers expanding their estates and opening new shops. Since the recession this trend has reversed dramatically with vacancy rates increasing substantially.
- 2.3 Different areas of the country and different towns are not all faring the same. For example, a summary of research on high street performance undertaken by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2011 divided up town centres into five distinct groups based on performance data - highlighting those towns that were 'thriving' at one end of the scale and those that were 'failing' at the other. Similarly statistics on footfall and vacancy rates vary considerably between different regions and areas.
- 2.4 Research has identified vacancy rates as an important aspect of high street performance. For example, both the BIS report mentioned above and Mary Portas's review of high streets identified retail closures as a key driver of high street decline. Retail closures lead to reduced footfall on high streets which in turn weakens the performance of nearby stores and the high street as a whole. This increases the likelihood of further store closures - creating a 'downward spiral' of high street decline.
- 2.5 The Government is committed to helping town centres and high streets. It wants to support vibrant hubs where people live, shop, use services and spend their leisure time. The Government has recently taken forward a wide range of measures to support high streets and town centres, including the creation of over 360 town teams and funding for successful initiatives such as "Love your Local Market" and the "Great British High Street".



3 Objectives

3.1 In order to support policymaking and to help the Authority understand how local areas are faring, the Authority wishes to purchase up-to-date data on vacancy rates in high streets, town centres and other retail centres across England, as well as unit opening and closures across the country. This data will be used to track the 'health' of local areas and individual town centres as well as aid the Authority in targeting support and funding in the most effective way.

4 Scope

4.1 The initial contract is for data provided for a period of 1 year with the option to extend for a further year.

4.2 The data must include information on the following:

- Vacancy rates of retail units
- Vacancy rates of leisure units (e.g. restaurants, bars, cafes)
- Openings and closures of retail units (for example as a monthly or quarterly summary of all openings and closures of units in local areas)
- Openings and closures of leisure units

4.3 In addition:

- The data must be available at a local level: The Authority needs to be able to monitor vacancy rates and openings/closures in individual towns and at sub-regional levels. Therefore data must be provided at low geography levels. As a minimum data must be available at lower tier local authority (district) level.
- The data must be able to be aggregated to a national or regional level.
- Provided data must be updated regularly: the Authority requires up-to-date information on current vacancy rates and recent openings/closures.
- Historic data on vacancy rates must be provided (going back to at least March 2015).

4.4 As well as headline figures on vacancy rates, openings and closures for the above units we also require additional information about the nature of units. This includes (but is not limited to):

- The type of use of the unit (for example the type of retail or leisure unit).
- The length of use or length which the unit has been vacant.

4.5 The data must be able to support the Authority to undertake the following work:

- Tracking vacancy rates of individual town centres over time.
- Providing briefing and background on high streets and town centres for individual towns, cities or regions.
- Undertaking detailed analysis of vacancy rates, openings and closures on town centres, retail sectors (for example analysis on convenience stores) and if possible analysis on individual retailers.



- Facilitating the production of GIS maps and allowing the Authority to undertake spatial analysis of the data.

5 Deliverables/Outputs and Performance Measures

5.1 The Contractor will deliver the following:

- Accurate vacancy data for (as a minimum) retail and leisure units. Vacancy data on other use locations would also be desirable.
- Up-to-date data on unit openings and closures of the same variety of unit types. Summaries of openings and closures each quarter (as a minimum time period) to be provided to the Authority.
- Data on the above which is available at a sub-regional level, preferably data which is available for individual properties/units. As a minimum data is required at a lower geography level than lower tier (district) local authority areas.
- Historic data for the above to be provided going back at least 3 years (to March 2015).
- Additional information on the length of occupancy/vacancy of units and detail about type of unit use is desirable.
- Data must cover the whole of England in as much detail as possible. At a minimum data is required for towns with a population of greater than 10,000 (according to the 2011 census). Data is not required for Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

5.2 At a minimum updated, up-to-date data must be provided to the Authority on a monthly basis.

5.3 The Contractor will set out their methodological approach to collect this information, including a full justification of the methods and evidence that the data has been thoroughly quality assured and is of acceptable accuracy.

5.4 Data must be provided to the Authority in a format compatible with Microsoft Excel and/or via an online platform which allows the Authority to download/convert data into a Microsoft Excel format.

5.5 Where applicable, training on how to access and analyse the data must be provided to the Authority.

5.6 Ongoing technical and analytical support must be provided to the Authority for the duration of the contract.

6 Approach

6.1 The Contractor must set out their methodological approach to address the aims and objectives of the research highlighted above in detail, including a full justification of the methods.



7 Key Dates

- 7.1 Start of contract: 26/03/2018
- 7.2 Inception meeting: Week commencing 26/03/2018
- 7.3 Delivery of first data: 01/04/2018 (with future data to be delivered on the first of every month)
- 7.4 Quarterly review: Week commencing 02/07/2018
- 7.5 Quarterly review: Week commencing 01/10/2018
- 7.6 Decision made on contract extension: 30/11/2018
- 7.7 Quarterly review: Week commencing 07/01/2019
- 7.8 End of contract: 25/03/2019

8 Contract Management Arrangements

- 8.1 The contractor will be required to attend an initial inception meeting shortly after the contract is awarded to discuss and finalise arrangements for delivery of data and to agree data quality benchmarks for the contract.
- 8.2 The contractor will also be required to deliver progress reports every quarter, either in person (to be held at the Authority's London office at Marsham Street) or via telephone. This will cover progress of the project and address any specific queries/questions that the Authority may have.
- 8.3 The contract will be managed by an analyst within the Authority's Growth and Places Analysis team.
- 8.4 Payments will be made on a quarterly basis, upon the acceptance of satisfactory data for the preceding quarter.
- 8.5 The benchmarks for satisfactory data quality will be set out and agreed between the Contractor and the Authority at the Contract inception meeting. .
- 8.6 The quality benchmarks will be set in accordance with the extent of national coverage, level of geography, level of additional information and level of accuracy as defined in the Contractor's proposal.
- 8.7 The agreed quality benchmarks will be incorporated into the final Contract via a formal Contract variation.