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Delivering a comprehensive work order management system

Sheffield University has nearly 500 properties totalling 380,000 m². The Estates department, which is part of the Facilities Management Directorate, needed a comprehensive system for managing these, principally for maintenance and service through a Helpdesk and Work Orders approach. "We do refurbishment work, and architectural and engineering and clerical work for new buildings. But we needed something mostly for PPM – the planned preventive maintenance – and

we wanted something that would improve on the functionality of the existing stand-alone helpdesk."

Jeff Ingram from the Department of Estates is explaining what Planon means at Sheffield University.

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Not just plonking a system on your desk

"When it came to selection criteria, we looked at four options. Among other things, the link to MICAD was very important for us: we had space details in MICAD and the old helpdesk system, but there was absolutely no communication between them. We were perfectly happy to keep MICAD as core data, however, and Planon provided a link via XML." Ingram is positive about the way Planon tackled his department's problems. "The other thing that was really missing for the maintenance was a drag-and-drop planner function. We pretty much made the order conditional on it being provided, and they did it! The relationship is good – we're very, very pleased with what we've seen up to now. Especially the implementation process, PIM: none of the others offered that option – Planon doesn't just plonk a system on your desk and expect you to take it from there yourself."

"The information in MICAD that we were most keen on using was the asbestos tracking. Now after a bit of configuration work we've got flags in Planon linked to it that can give the contractors any associated warnings and the necessary instructions. We thought that was excellent."

Sharing the central database

Jeff Ingram also has plans for the future with Planon. "What we're looking at doing in the future is having two satellite helpdesks, but still linked to the one central database. The student union and the accommodation and campus services have got rather different assets in their inventory. So what we would like to do is have a local reporting point – a broken bed or something like that doesn't have to be reported to us, for example. Then those two groups can filter out the jobs that they need to sort out themselves."

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Cutting the paperwork and the red tape

"The biggest changes to the work processes involve the helpdesk on the one hand and the engineers and contractors on the other. Instead of having the job details printed off, it's all electronic now. The people doing the work are getting more involved with the administrative side, updating the information directly and so on. It's cut out a lot of paperwork and red tape. That has made room for the helpdesk, which was becoming overloaded, to handle more calls and also take on items such as key management and car access. And the other thing that will free up time is the capability for end users to log in a job through their web browser – the information goes straight into the database and they get a job number on the screen, so they will be able to follow its history too. And that goes live next week!"