Case Study

University of Sunderland

Live in just 7 weeks with Planon's out-of-the-box Campus Management solution.

'Visibility across the estate was a huge driver to implement a new integrated facilities management system. Now, we have the foundations to make informed decisions about where we want to go in the future.'

- John Knight, Head of Estates & Facilities Business Development, University of Sunderland

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Planon
Building Connections

The University of Sunderland is an international university with campuses located in Sunderland, London, and Hong Kong. Originally established as a municipal training college in 1901, University of Sunderland gained university status in 1992 and now has about 20,000 students across all its locations.

Celebrated for its social inclusion and diverse student population (over 120 nationalities represented), the University of Sunderland was shortlisted for University of the Year by Times Higher Education Awards in 2021.

The journey towards future ambitions

The University of Sunderland's legacy computer-aided facility management (CAFM) system was no longer keeping up with the University's needs and expectations. Instead of enabling efficiency, the system was dated and slow, and holding the University back. In order to move towards a leaner way of working, the University wanted to implement a completely new system.

In an effort to avoid unnecessary renewal costs, the University's Estates department wanted to decommission its legacy system and be up and running with a new system as soon as possible. This fixed deadline, paired with heightened expectations for efficiency within the Estates departments and the growing need for better reporting and improved governance drove the University's search for a new system, specifically an integrated workplace management system (IWMS), to improve its operations.

'It was very clear that having a better integrated facilities system to improve data quality and analytics was important to the university,' said John Knight, Head of Estates & Facilities Business Development at the University of Sunderland.

'We needed a system that would allow us to take our data and make it meaningful, and to be able to actually analyse it and help set out a clear direction for us to improve for the next year and the year after.'

Selecting an off-the-shelf system

There are many initiatives on the University of Sunderland's strategic agenda around workplace transformation, space utilisation, sustainability and adopting new technology to become a smarter campus – especially in combination with the City of Sunderland's aim to become a smart city. Knight recognised that the University needed a unified data platform and forward-thinking technology partner to help drive these future ambitions.

'Having a partner who could join us on this technology journey was a major decision-making point,' said Knight. He wanted to equip his team with a true out-of-the-box solution that incorporated best practices and could be easily extended to meet the University's growing needs. Planon's Campus Management solution was ideal for this.

'If we went down the route of a totally bespoke system, we would still be talking about it now and would have spent three to four times as much time getting started,' Knight said. 'And actually, for what we want to achieve, an off the shelf system was the right way to go.'

During the selection process, Knight determined that it was very important to have buy-in from the everyday users of the system, in addition to the executive team. To achieve this, Knight brought all stakeholders together to explain why they were changing systems, provide some training on the new options, give them scenarios to test within the software, asked them to try to break it, and requested they come back with feedback and suggestions. Stakeholders were then asked to rank the systems, and this input was used for the final decision on which vendor to choose.

'This worked so well,' Knight said. 'The whole team felt included, and it created ownership and empowered people because they were a key part of the decision on how we would move forward.'
In the end, Planon's Campus Management solution, including Maintenance Management, Real Estate Management, and Space & Workplace Management, was selected for its out-of-the-box capabilities, ease of use, and Planon's commitment to being an innovative technology partner to support smart campus initiatives.

What took 10 minutes, now just takes seconds

Knight said his team put in a lot of hard work to cleanse their data and identify gaps before they even went to tender. Knight's approach to training his team on the software during the selection process, and the decision to opt for the pre-configured delivery of Planon's out-of-the-box solution, meant that the University of Sunderland was able to purchase, implement, and **go live with Planon Reactive Maintenance in just seven weeks.**

Knight said the **process efficiency benefits** of Planon were clear almost immediately. In the old system it took his team up to 10 minutes to upload one maintenance issue and turn it into a work order request.

'I knew the Planon system was unlocking greater efficiency for us when one of the helpdesk employees told me that the system couldn't possibly be working correctly, because she was able to triage a work order request in the system with just four clicks,' he said. 'But that was exactly what it should be: four clicks and it's sent to where it's needed to be within seconds. The whole team was blown away.' The University's Estates team was able to realise even more efficiency by tightening up SLAs around work orders. The Planon system provides greater transparency and accountability to the way the work is allocated, resulting in jobs being completed faster, with the most complicated ones delivered in no more than six weeks. This, in turn, contributes greatly to improving the student and campus experience.

Planon's **unified data platform also provides greater visibility** across the Estate, from monitoring productivity across the team to greater transparency in governance, including Health & Safety compliance and the ability to report on it. This means the Estates team can now easily provide accurate and reliable data to its leadership for compliance and strategic decisions.

With the foundation in place, what's next?

Knight says over the next few months, the Planon system will become fully embedded into the University, but they are already starting to use data from the system to help influence decisions and determine the next projects and initiatives that they will start moving forward.

Up next, the University plans to roll out proactive maintenance, Planon Mobile Field Services (PMFS), as well as self-service capabilities with Planon's Workplace Engagement App, which will enable the students, faculty, and staff to submit incidents and requests directly from their mobile devices to the Estates team through the Planon system.

About University of Sunderland

- **20,000** students
- **1,700** faculty and staff
- **39** buildings managed across 4 campuses
- **1.6 million** gross square footage managed

'**We managed to be up and running in no more than 7 weeks. We hit our deadline, saved on implementation costs, were able to decommission our legacy system with no renewal charge, but most importantly, all our users were fully trained on the Planon system during this process, so they were ready to go.**'

- John Knight, Head of Estates & Facilities Business Development, University of Sunderland