InfoTrack

Anthony Collins:
From bottlenecks to brighter outcomes

Anthony Collins

Midlands-based Top 200 law firm, Anthony Collins, is levelling up their commercial real estate workflow to nurture client relationships through reliable, efficient, and cost-effective service delivery. We spoke with Sandy Munroe, Local Government Property Partner, to explore how InfoTrack is enabling the firm to alleviate bottlenecks and expand their opportunities.

Switching to InfoTrack has resulted in:

- Saving 30 minutes per SDLT
- Fewer AP1 requisitions – down by 14% since 2020
- More accurate pricing, leading to a 20% increase in Local Government property tender win rates since 2020
- Improved accuracy throughout the post completion process

Anthony Collins is a firm with a passion for social purpose. A Legal500 firm, they service the Midlands community across practice areas including social housing, charity, education, local government, and health and social care. As one of the UK's leading firms operating in social housing, Anthony Collins is continually looking to improve service delivery for their clients to ensure they remain a trusted legal services provider.

Sandy Munroe is a Partner at Anthony Collins and leads the Local Government Property Development Team. With more than 30 years' commercial property experience, she's seen the evolution of technology in the legal sector and has been instrumental in its adoption at the firm. We caught up with Sandy to understand the impact InfoTrack has had on improving their processes and achieving the firm's aspirations to create a better workflow and efficiencies for the whole team.

> " I wanted a service that was easy to use and that other firms had recommended. InfoTrack was what we had been hearing about. "
>
> Sandy Munroe, Partner

From penalties and avoidance to accurate and on time

Bottlenecks were previously a gripe for Anthony Collins' local government and social housing development team. These bottlenecks were often a result of errors creeping into Land Registry application forms, information missing from transfers received from the Seller's solicitors, and inconsistencies when completing SDLT forms. Swift completion of registrations, particularly for the social housing acquisitions (which often led to plot sales), was crucial.

These errors and inconsistencies would result in HM Land Registry requisitions and sometimes SDLT penalties, which in turn delayed registration completions at HM Land Registry. This had a knock-on effect for the plot sales team and meant a lot of time which could not be billed being spent trying to deal with the requisitions in a timely manner, in order to resolve the delays in the land registration process.

Much of their pain came from using an HMRC tool that did not match the printed hard copy forms and where the question and answer tools that could be used to assist in completing the forms were not in the same place as the forms themselves – in other words having to use tools that were not user-friendly.

The technology created a barrier instead of supporting their tasks, which meant that the tasks were then put to the bottom of the individual's already busy list. Secretaries were completing the forms manually or online, retracting the information from dictations sent to them by the fee earners. Forms were then either printed and posted or submitted online as an electronic version, after being downloaded and saved and sent to the clients for sign off - it was tedious.

The clunkiness of the system for preparing and submitting SDLT returns (often for clients who were exempt from any SDLT) was one of the main reasons that Anthony Collins sought out InfoTrack. Sandy comments, "SDLT with InfoTrack is saving us significant time because the forms are more intuitive, and the assistance notes help with accuracy when completing them. The system is very easy to use, which means that the team are completing the SDLTs on time now – often even before completion."

Previously, completing an SDLT took around 40 minutes. It's now less than 10 minutes – a saving that quickly adds up when a social housing completion can sometimes involve 10 or more plots all by way of separate transfers.

Quickly realising the huge time-saving benefits, the team at Anthony Collins began adopting more of InfoTrack's commercial property solutions, including conveyancing searches, digital AP1s, and electronic signatures.

"It saves additional time if you use InfoTrack from the start for the searches and title because the InfoTrack platform pre-populates the data. So once we input a property address, we can produce the AP1 more quickly, as by the time we get to completion, most of the information is already in the system. More and more of the wider Property team are using InfoTrack because it allows you to input the information from day one and save time throughout," says Sandy.

Completing everything in one place has also **reduced requisitions** for the Anthony Collins team by at least **14% since 2020**.

"There is less room for error because you are not continually inputting the same information, so there is less risk of misinterpreting how you should complete the different sections of the AP1 and the SDLT forms. It is now a streamlined process with less issues, resulting in fewer client complaints - everything in this space operates better now," adds Sandy.

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Winning more business with better ways of working

A prominent social housing and local government commercial real estate firm, Anthony Collins works on large scale projects with registered providers and local authorities. Much of the local government property work involves a tender or mini-tender process, which has led the firm to focus on accurate fee proposals while still offering excellent service delivery. Using great technology to support fee proposals and work delivery has enabled the Local Government Property Team in particular to improve the client experience.

In the last two years, **the tender win rate for the Local Government Property team has increased year on year by more than 20%.** This is in part a result of being able to provide more accurate fee quotes to clients, which Sandy says is crucial in a competitive market. Having the ability to access high level title and other key information quickly is vital.

Expanding beyond post completion SDLT returns and AP1 applications, the Property team is now using eSignatures and ordering searches, office copy entries, and extract reports, all from within the InfoTrack platform.

Managed services making the whole process easier

Having support they can count on is essential for Sandy and her Property Team at Anthony Collins. Knowing they are working with a like-minded client-focussed technology provider has been a point of difference.

Using InfoTrack's portfolio team to manage bulk extracts and obtain title information in an easy-to-review format has been key in the wider adoption of InfoTrack across the whole team.

"Getting the bulk extract report in a spreadsheet has increased our ability to provide multiple reports to clients quickly and accurately and to pull out salient information as and when required. It is also a useful training tool for the more junior members of the team as the information is set out in such an easily digestible format. It has made it easier to ensure that nothing gets missed," shares Sandy.

"The spreadsheet of Land Registry titles makes it easier to find the information we need and provide it easily to the client. You have got all the rights, all the reservations, all the restrictive covenants in separate columns – making it easier for us to prepare our title reports," she adds.

But it is not just the information that Sandy and her team receive that has made a difference, it is also the personal approach and dedicated managed services that has made a lasting impact.

"Having a dedicated resource, including an account manager and the Commercial Services Team, that you can reach out to when you have any sort of questions, escalation points, or presentations that need to be done is incredibly helpful. Having one port of call and someone that you can get hold of has been key," says Sandy.

Sandy's advice to other firms considering the switch to InfoTrack?

"It is absolutely worth it, because using InfoTrack end-to-end saves so much time and with the constant pressure on fees, being efficient is key. It is much simpler having so much of the information in one place, making sure it is correct and then pressing the relevant buttons to submit to HMRC and Land Registry. InfoTrack has improved the accuracy of our fee proposals and we can even include an accurate estimate of the cost of searches."

"The speed that office copies and extract title information are returned helps when a client requests a fee proposal, because we can quickly access the information and provide a fee proposal with great certainty that we have got the price right. This means no surprises or cost increases at a later stage."

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Find out how you can start your journey
with InfoTrack. **Get in touch today:**

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