

Government to launch new industry plan

Revised strategy addressing skills shortages and BIM adoption will be published within weeks

By Yoozof Farah and Iain Withers

A new government construction strategy focused on improving client skills, tackling industry skills shortages and further adoption of BIM will be published within weeks, Building can reveal.

Speaking to Building, chief construction adviser Peter Hansford (pictured) said the new strategy will be launched "shortly before or after" chancellor George Osborne's Spending Review next Wednesday (25 November).

Hansford said the new strategy will also focus on whole-life costing and whole-life carbon reduction, and improving procurement by encouraging earlier contractor involvement in projects.

Hansford told Building the strategy "continues in the direction" of the previous one launched at the start of the last parliament, but "really takes it to the next level".

A source close to the process said Cabinet Office minister Matt Hancock will take over responsibility for delivering the strategy when Hansford steps down later this month, as a result of his role being discontinued.

When asked to confirm Hancock's role, Hansford said: "It needs a ministerial sign off, so yes there is an involvement there."

The source also said improving client procurement capability will be a key focus, and one proposal is to draw on the expertise of the government's cross-department Complex Transactions Team - which has focused on other areas of procurement, including IT services - on major construction projects.

The new strategy will follow on from the government's previous strategy published in May 2011 by then-construction adviser Paul Morrell, in which it committed to make savings of 20% across public sector construction projects by 2016 and to procure using BIM Level 2.

Morrell told Building: "I would certainly hope there is a reasoned basis for [any proposed measures], rather than another attempt to reinvent the wheel.

"Above all, though, let's have no more damn-fool targets which are there presumably just to catch the eye of politicians and the media."

Commenting on the planned new strategy, Graham Watts, chief executive of the Construction

Industry Council, said he supported the Cabinet Office's "great work" through the previous strategy, but said he expected the new one to be "much of the same."

It emerged this week as Building went to press that seven more government departments have agreed to cut spending by about a third.

22 Bishopsgate gets a date

Lipton Rogers' replacement scheme for the Pinnacle site - 22

Bishopsgate - could start on site as early as next February, according to a source close to the project. The 62-storey tower - designed by PLP and set to be constructed by Brookfield Multiplex - was given the green light by the City of London this week. The source said the construction value is likely to be around £500m. Brookfield Multiplex signed a pre-construction agreement with Lipton Rogers last February and the two parties will work to agree a lump sum for the main works by February 2016, allowing main works to begin on site that month. Completion is scheduled for November 2018. Building revealed earlier this month that William Hare and Careys have been lined up for the £40m-50m steel and £30m-40m concrete packages respectively. Keltbray is already on site demolishing the old "stump" of concrete core abandoned by the former Pinnacle scheme and modifying the piling works. According to the City of London's planning report the scheme crams in a whopping 2.2 million ft² of floor space, 1 million ft² more than the Shard, despite it being 30m shorter at 278m tall. City of London planners said the building's free-to-visit viewing gallery over the top three floors and public gallery on the ground floor were critical to it being recommended for approval. WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff is engineer, Alinea is the cost consultant, Aecom is the employer's agent and environmental consultant, Wilson James is providing logistics and DP9 is the planning consultant.

