



The Hague



Drone Policy for The Hague 2025-2029

With care in the air and with an eye for the city



Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Ambition	7
What drones can contribute	7
Opportunities for municipal use of drones	8
Points of interest	9
Constraints in The Hague	10
Conditions for municipal use	10
1. Safe	10
2. Privacy-oriented	11
3. Transparent	12
Drones in the city	13
Organisation	15
Risk paragraph	17

Foreword

Drones are no longer toys or a distant dream. They are here, and their presence is felt in The Hague. Drones provide breathtaking aerial views of our city, aid in smart monitoring, and support emergency services. The technology that initially felt new and exciting is now ordinary and common.

Drones are increasingly accessible to all kinds of users. In just one year, the municipality and police counted more than ten thousand drone flights within The Hague's city limits, and that number will only increase. The possibilities are increasing just as fast, if not faster. From medicine transport to meal delivery, from rapid incident response to washing windows on high-rise buildings in The Hague.

Although the use of drones for municipal tasks is still in its infancy, the possibilities for municipalities are growing as well. Drones are already being used in The Hague for building inspections, but it won't stop there. Drones have numerous benefits for the municipality's work in the city. Drones can be on site quickly, can perform inspections with far less disruption, and can reach areas that are dangerous or difficult for people to access.

The true distinction between science fiction and reality is something only time can tell. In any case, the rapid expansion of drones raises new issues. Despite all the possibilities, the Municipality of The Hague wants to tread carefully with this new technology. Safety is paramount, and the privacy of the city's residents must also be protected from the sky. Furthermore, drones can cause disruptions, especially when the reason for their presence is unclear. Therefore, it is important to always consider such public values when using drones in The Hague.

With that in mind, the emergence of drone technology requires new frameworks. The Drone Policy for The Hague 2025–2029 outlines the municipality's responsible approach to drone use. The municipality encourages innovation and seizes opportunities whenever possible, but always under strict conditions. Privacy-oriented, secure, and transparent use is key to ensuring that drones add value to The Hague and its residents.

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Introduction

What are drones?

Drones, also called unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), are small aircraft that are usually remotely piloted but can fly autonomously as well. The most common type of drone is the *multirotor drone*, featuring multiple propellers and vertical take-off and manoeuvring; there are also *fixed-wing drones* that look more like small airplanes and are suitable for longer distances.

Drones are typically controlled remotely by a drone operator or pilot via a radio signal. The drone operator can generally see the drone. This is known as visual line of sight (VLOS). The drone operator is often supported in this process with live video footage.

Drones are normally permitted to fly up to 120 metres in the Netherlands. To prevent accidents, Europe-wide rules have been implemented for flying drones. The set of rules the drone operator must follow depends on the type of drone and the risk involved with the flight.

Drones come in a wide range of shapes and sizes, from small consumer drones to large professional drones. Depending on their intended purpose, drones can be equipped with cameras, sensors, and other measuring devices. Some drones can also transport light goods.

Drones are continuously evolving. There are currently trials underway in the Netherlands with flight beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS), where the drone flies out of the operator's direct line of sight. In that case, the drone is controlled from a ground station, sometimes using pre-programmed flight paths. BVLOS is only possible to a limited extent in the Netherlands. An intermediate variant is the extended visual line of sight (EVLOS), in which the drone is watched by observers.

A relatively new concept is the drone-in-a-box system: The drone launches autonomously from a docking station (the 'box'), carries out a task, and then returns automatically to recharge.

In addition to unmanned aerial vehicles, there are also unmanned surface vehicles (boats) and unmanned underwater vehicles (submarines).

The municipality's role in relation to drones

The expansion of drones and rapid technological developments are affecting the municipality in multiple ways. Drone Network Gemeenten (drone network for municipalities, 2022) distinguishes four municipal roles: guardian, facilitator, regulator and user. This drone policy addresses each of these roles.

First, the municipality is itself a user of drones for purposes such as performing building inspections or collecting 3D geographic information. For its own operations, the municipality determines for which tasks drones can be used and under what conditions.

The municipality also has an interest in facilitating useful drone flights by companies and institutions when these benefit the city at large, such as by enhancing safety, supporting healthcare, or improving mobility. In such cases, the municipality provides room for these activities, but always on the condition that privacy and safety are safeguarded.

At the same time, the municipality works to protect the living and working environment from unwanted drone flights. This is especially important given The Hague's status as an International City of Peace and Justice.

Roles and responsibilities

This drone policy addresses the tasks facing the municipality. The regulation and enforcement of drone operations lie outside the municipality's jurisdiction. This responsibility lies with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The same applies to the designation of 'no-fly zones'. The Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (ILT) issues licenses and monitors compliance. The police are tasked with maintaining public order. Therefore, the municipality works with these parties, each acting within its own area of responsibility.

Purpose of this policy

The Drone Policy for The Hague has the following objectives:

- outline how drones can contribute to the city;
- provide a framework for determining the municipal tasks for which drones may be used and the conditions under which this may occur;
- formulate strategic priorities for facilitating drone operations within the city;
- define how the municipality will organise this.

How this relates to other policies

The Municipality of The Hague believes it is important to remain a full and capable participant in the digital society. This policy translates that ambition into the drone domain. It should not be seen as a standalone document, but rather as part of a broader policy framework. It has been prepared in line with the new municipal I-vision 2025-2030 *Samen Digitaal Vooruit* (Shaping the Digital Future Together), the Privacy Policy ([RIS318934](#)) and the Strategic Information Security Policy Framework ([RIS319229](#)).

Committee letter from 2021 concerning drones in The Hague

In 2021, the Municipal Executive informed the City Council about the emergence of drones and the new EU regulations ([RIS307519](#)). This drone policy further builds on that. Those EU regulations have been in place for several years, and drones have continued to evolve.

SHIELD study on drones in The Hague

The municipality and the police are researching drones in The Hague through the SHIELD joint innovation hub ([RIS321416](#)). For more information, see the section on *Drones in the City*. The findings and lessons learned from the first phase of the study (completed in March 2025) have been incorporated into this drone policy.

Students in conversation with residents

As part of the SHIELD study, two student groups conducted interviews and surveys in The Hague to establish how residents view the use of drones. The students conducted this work as part of the elective programme Law & Safety in Public Services at InHolland University of Applied Sciences. The interviews show that many residents see the benefits of drones but also express concerns about privacy. However, residents are more understanding when it is clear who a drone belongs to and why a drone is flying somewhere. These perspectives from the residents of The Hague have been valuable input for this drone policy.

Validity period and evaluation

This policy has been adopted by the Municipal Executive for 2025 to 2029 and will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary at the end of that period.

Ambition

The municipality wants to utilise the opportunities of drones while remaining mindful of concerns and risks. As such, privacy protection, safe flight, and transparency are key to the use of drones. This is the balance that the municipality seeks to maintain, which is reflected in the following ambition that guides decisions on drone deployment:

The Municipality of The Hague uses drones responsibly and respectfully when they make city work safer, cleaner or better.

What drones can contribute

Drones are airborne and highly manoeuvrable. This makes them ideal for quickly accessing hard-to-reach areas. Drones also offer an extra pair of eyes in the sky, providing a good overview from above. Drones are equipped with high-resolution cameras and can be fitted with sensors and other measuring devices to provide detailed digital mapping of the environment.

Safe and fast:

Drones can be deployed quickly and can achieve high speeds, enabling rapid assessment of dangerous or urgent situations. This is faster and more cost-effective than erecting scaffolding, deploying an aerial work platform, or using a crane. It is also safer to send a drone to a high-risk, contaminated, or hard-to-reach location than to send a human or animal.

Sustainable and lower impact:

Drones are electric and lightweight, making them more sustainable than cranes, helicopters, airplanes, or boats. Aerial photography by plane has a larger CO₂ footprint and isn't always possible due to cloud cover. Drones also have a smaller impact on their surroundings: roads can remain open, inspectors do not need to enter homes or require residents to stay at home, and work can continue with minimal disruption.

Innovative:

Drones enable new ways of working. Drones can get to places that are otherwise unreachable. Drones can also provide a new or more complete view of the environment. Drones can be pre-programmed to follow extremely precise routes and can use smart measurement equipment. As such, drones enhance innovation and data-driven operations.

Opportunities for municipal use of drones

Drones can support the municipality in various aspects of its work. The internal drone expert group has identified potential applications for municipal tasks. This overview is intended to outline the opportunities; it does not mean the municipality will use drones for all of these purposes. The deployment of a drone is always assessed on a case by case basis.

Building and living	Geo-information	Infrastructure and projects
Inspecting construction and renovation work (see info box)	Collecting 2D and 3D geo information	Inspecting assets such as roads, bridges, and tunnels
Inspecting building maintenance and safety (see info box)	Collecting data for heritage and monument preservation	Photographing archaeological excavations
Inspecting illegal use of public space	Collecting data on private/ onsite parking	Surveying and measuring works
		Conducting mobility research
Nature and environment	Marketing and tourism	Port and water
Inspecting trees	Photographing and filming for promotional and communication materials	Inspecting work on ships
Monitoring nature reserves	Staging drone shows (as an alternative to fireworks)	Inspecting anchorage areas
Detecting illegal waste dumping		Inspecting quay walls in inland waterways (including underwater)
		Monitoring surface water pollution

The theme of safety is not included in this overview because the use of drones in the safety domain falls under the remit of the police and the Security Region. These organisations are not part of the municipality.

Info box: Drone inspects buildings

The municipality uses drones to inspect buildings in The Hague. They check whether construction and renovation work has been carried out in accordance with the permits. This includes extensions, rooftop additions, rooftop terraces, and dormers. Reports of potentially illegal structures or poorly maintained homes are also investigated in this way. The drone can reach places that would otherwise be difficult to access.

It flies several times a year in different locations throughout the city, at an altitude of 60 to 100 metres. Two people are present on the ground: one operating the drone and one taking photos as instructed by the municipality. A municipal inspector monitors the live video feed on-site and indicates which buildings need to be photographed.

The drone only takes photos of buildings. The municipality does not store any video footage. The intention is not to photograph individuals. If this does occur, the people are made unrecognisable in the photograph.

Points of interest

In addition to drones' capabilities, it is important to understand the concerns and risks.

Privacy

Seeing drones in the air can make people feel like they are being watched, even if they are not in the picture and no images are being stored. This is especially true in residential areas, as well as in public spaces such as parks or at the beach. Drones equipped with cameras can capture images in places where people typically expect privacy. Because drones are often small, they are also difficult to see, if at all. Anyone collecting data with a drone must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) at all times.

Disturbance and safety

Drones can cause disturbance to both humans and animals. Drones make a high-pitched buzzing noise, which can be found disturbing in residential areas and nature reserves. The visibility of drones in the sky can also be perceived as intrusive, especially when it is unclear what they are doing. Although there are many rules for flying drones safely, there is always a risk of accidents, such as equipment malfunctions or collisions.

Excessive deployment

In addition to concerns about privacy, disturbance, and safety, it is important to be mindful of the risk of overuse. Because drones are relatively cheap and easily deployable, there is a risk that they will be used more often than necessary or for purposes other than their intended use. This increases the risk of disturbance and may also make people in The Hague feel more monitored and watched. Because drones can observe a lot, violations or other illegal activities may inadvertently

come into view during a general inspection drone flight that do not fall under the predetermined purpose. In that case, it is important to know when and how you may respond to it, and when you may not.

Constraints in The Hague

The Hague is one of the most complicated cities in the Netherlands for drone use. Flying drones is forbidden in much of The Hague due to numerous drone no-fly zones. For example, it is forbidden to fly near ministries, royal palaces, the Scheveningen prison, international organisations, the port of Scheveningen, and helicopter platforms. As a rule, flying over Natura 2000 areas is also not permitted. At the time of drafting this policy, part of The Hague also belongs to the controlled traffic region (CTR) of Rotterdam The Hague Airport. However, the central government wants to reduce this no-fly zone in the near future.

Not only do the no-fly zones cover large portions of The Hague, but many places are covered by multiple no-fly zones at the same time. Operating a drone without permission is prohibited in no-fly zones. This restricts the use of drones in The Hague, which, in turn, affects drone policy.

No-fly zones are designated by the central government; the municipality has no control over them. The ILT is responsible for granting exemptions for flights in no-fly zones.

The current map of no-fly zones is available on GoDrone's website: map.godrone.nl.

Conditions for municipal use

Drones can offer significant benefits for the city. At the same time, residents of The Hague must be able to trust that the municipality uses drones responsibly. To achieve this, this drone policy is translated into three core principles. This is how the municipality handles drone deployment: 1. **Safe**, 2. **Privacy-oriented** and 3. **Transparent**.

1. Safe

Safety is paramount. Residents can expect the municipality to fly drones responsibly and professionally. The municipality, in turn, makes every effort to reduce risks and prevent incidents.

- The municipality adheres strictly to applicable drone legislation and regulations. These regulations are European and made available by the central government.

- The municipality drafts an operations manual for each application domain. This manual describes how drone flights must be conducted to ensure safety and compliance with applicable regulations, covering flight preparation, emergency procedures, maintenance, and training.
- A flight plan is prepared for each drone flight. The flight plan prepares the flight and identifies safety risks in advance, allowing appropriate measures to be taken.
- When using heavier drones, additional safety measures are taken as necessary, such as using a parachute or closing off an area.
- All drone flights are conducted by certified drone operators, even when not required by law.
- Every municipal department that uses drones continuously invests in its employees' expertise and capabilities.
- The municipality provides a safe working environment for the drone operator and other employees involved.
- The municipality considers animal welfare when deploying drones.

2. Privacy-oriented

Flying drones goes hand in hand with protecting the privacy of the people of The Hague. The municipality always weighs carefully whether the purpose justifies the use of a drone.

- The municipality follows the Basic Principles for the Use of Camera Drones by the Data Protection Authority (DPA). These principles outline the key concerns for drones under the GDPR. The municipality also follows the "Principles for the Digital Society" by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). These principles provide a framework for responsible data collection in public spaces.
- For each municipal task that involves deploying a drone in public space, the municipality prepares a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) under Article 35 of the GDPR. Among other things, the DPIA assesses the purpose, necessity, proportionality and subsidiarity of the drone deployment.
- Drones are only used when there is a clear and justified purpose. Drones are never used for anything other than the predetermined and documented purposes.
- The municipality only flies drones when it has demonstrable benefits over other methods.
- With each new task for which a drone is used, the municipality also considers the ethical aspects, weighing drone deployment against public values, in accordance with the ambition of this drone policy.
- The municipality applies the principle of privacy by design. The collection of personal data is minimised. Where possible, software is used to automatically anonymise footage so that individuals are no longer identifiable.
- The municipality never surveys a larger area than necessary. Private property is avoided, and flights over nature reserves and recreational areas are never lower than necessary.
- Navigation footage of the flight and route to the inspection site is only viewed live and not recorded.

- All data collected by drones is stored only as long as necessary under applicable legislation and regulations. Retention periods are established in advance and included in the DPIA.
- Data is not stored outside the European Economic Area (EEA). This is actively verified during supplier selection. The municipality takes additional data protection measures when using drones manufactured outside the EEA.
- Information security risks are identified for each drone application, and the necessary measures are taken.
- The municipality only uses secure systems to process and store data. Access to these systems is restricted and monitored periodically.
- Employees who deploy drones have clear guidelines on how to handle sensitive or unexpected sightings with due care.

3. Transparent

Residents of The Hague need to know when and why the municipality is using drones. Transparency is essential to gaining public support for drone use in public spaces. It also gives residents an opportunity to participate in the conversation about drones.

- The municipality publishes all information about its drones on www.denhaag.nl/drones. This page lists all the tasks for which the municipality uses drones. The municipality actively shares information about its new drone applications.
- If possible, information on conducted and planned drone flights, including their specific routes, will also be made available on this web page.
- Current drone flight privacy statements are shared under the [municipality's general privacy statement](#).
- At drone flight locations, signs will be posted to inform residents and passersby that a municipal drone flight is taking place.
- On the ground, it is clearly visible who is responsible for the flight; this can be achieved through identifiable clothing or signage. Municipal employees involved at the drone flight location are easily recognisable.
- The municipality ensures that residents' questions are answered quickly and properly. To that end, the municipal contact centre 14070 is informed ahead of planned drone flights. Area managers are briefed for each district.
- Residents can participate in discussions about how the municipality uses drones. Drones are one of the topics of the Living Lab Scheveningen's community engagement activities. The municipality also works with students to monitor residents' feelings toward drone activities.

Drones in the city

Drones can offer opportunities for The Hague and its community, even if they are not deployed by the municipality itself. As such, the municipality is committed to facilitating drone flights that are useful to The Hague. At the same time, the municipality works with responsible government parties to protect The Hague's living environment from unwanted drone activity.

Current situation

Drones are used for safety operations by both The Hague police and the Haaglanden Safety Region, for maintaining public order and firefighting, respectively. Homeowners' associations and housing cooperatives also sometimes use drones to inspect their properties. However, the majority of drones are used by recreational operators, primarily for photo and video recording.

Encourage useful drone flights

Domestic and international market participants are working on new drone applications. In the eastern part of the Netherlands, ANWB is experimenting with high-speed delivery of blood and medicine to hospitals. At TU Delft, researchers are developing an ambulance drone that can quickly dispatch an AED in case of emergency. In Dublin's suburbs, drones are already delivering snacks through the sky. The possibilities seem endless, but it is impossible to predict which will actually become valuable applications in practice. It is clear, however, that drones will increasingly use the lower airspace above cities.

Safe lower airspace

The proliferation of drones must not compromise safety. This is all the more important because drones may be used to disrupt public order, engage in espionage, or facilitate cyber attacks. This is particularly relevant for The Hague as a City of Peace and Justice.

Integrating drones into the urban environment safely and responsibly requires broad cooperation between the government, the drone industry, and drone users. Research by innovation hub SHIELD (see info box) shows that rules are often ignored. Flights are frequently made in no-fly zones, and drones are sometimes flown too high or out of sight. The majority of drones used in The Hague do not require certification or training. That may be a key reason many drone operators are unfamiliar with the rules.

At the same time, the municipality has no authority for drone regulation or enforcement, making cooperation with the national government essential.

Spatial and economic impact

If developments continue, drones will soon play a spatial and economic role in the municipality. The municipality will have to arrange the necessary locations and infrastructure for vertical drone landing and take-off (*vertiports*). This will create new forms of urban mobility, such as drone-delivered packages and meals,

and—possibly in the more distant future—passenger transportation. Work is also underway at the national level to establish geographic zones with special rules and services for drones (*U-space*).

Key themes:

1. The municipality is looking outward to monitor new developments.
The municipality participates in municipal networks for drones, maintains strong ties with the industry, and works closely with knowledge institutions.
2. The municipality supports new drone innovations for urban environments, ensuring that useful drone operations can make the greatest possible contribution to the city under the right conditions.
3. The municipality works with the national authorities responsible for drone regulation and enforcement to identify smart and feasible solutions for enforcement, security, and awareness.
4. The municipality makes every effort to work with the responsible authorities to create conditions in which drone flights can operate safely and in a controlled manner, and where no-fly zones are not just a formality but contribute effectively to protecting safety and privacy.
5. The municipality is talking to residents about drones in The Hague. The people of the city can contribute ideas and specify what they like or don't like.
The municipality is also exploring this topic in collaboration with knowledge institutions and students. The municipality will use these obtained insights in new developments and to draft new drone policy.

Info box: SHIELD study on drones in The Hague

The municipality is working with the police to investigate drone activity in the city. This is part of the police and municipality's innovation hub *SHIELD*. From September 2023 to September 2024, 11,000 drone flights were counted using special sensors that can detect drones based on the radio signals emitted.

Most flights are in late spring and summer, sometimes by up to a factor of ten compared to the winter months. Most flights are in the centre and near the beach and harbour of Scheveningen. Many of these flights are conducted in no-fly zones. In addition, 7.6% of the drone flights detected exceeded the permissible limit of 120 metres. The highest flight measured reached 2,400 metres. On average, drones fly at around 60 metres. Almost all of the drones detected were manufactured by DJI. The vast majority (73%) of flights were with a drone under 250 grams (model DJI Mini), which does not require certification or training.

[Read the full report here \(RIS321416\).](#)

Organisation

The use of drones within the Municipality of The Hague is decentralised; each municipal department decides independently whether to use drones for its activities. That department is then responsible for the careful deployment of drones, in line with the Drone Policy for The Hague. This also means that the department provides the necessary knowledge, execution, and financial resources.

Each municipal department also decides whether drone flights should be conducted by municipal employees or outsourced to a specialised company. The drone policy remains in full effect when outsourcing. If the number of drone applications grows in the future, the municipality will investigate whether pooling knowledge and drone flights will add value.

The municipal organisation has expertise available to provide support:

- The **Digital Innovation and Smart City Expertise Centre** supports innovative drone applications. Municipal departments and external parties wishing to explore new drone applications can contact this expertise centre.
- The **Privacy Expertise Centre** provides specialist advice on privacy issues, including preparing DPIAs and informing data subjects.
- The **Security Expertise Centre** provides specialist advice on information security risks and the measures to be taken.
- The **Data Protection Officer (DPO)** oversees the internal use of personal data.

Experimentation

The municipality is committed to innovation and to introducing new possibilities for drones on a small, controlled scale. To achieve this, the municipality follows an innovation process that systematically examines the potential added value of drones for a given task and assesses how that aligns with the parameters of this drone policy. The Living Lab Scheveningen can serve as a pilot environment for testing innovative drone applications.

Knowledge sharing

Knowledge gained is actively shared and applied within the municipal organisation. The municipality has established an internal **Drone Expert Group** to promote knowledge exchange and strengthen coordination on drones. The Drone Expert Group consists of employees from different departments that currently work with drones or will do so in the future.

Operational guidelines

The municipality has developed a generic data protection impact assessment (DPIA) for drone applications. The DPIA includes standard measures to ensure privacy and is supplemented with information and risk assessments appropriate to each specific application.

The Drone Expert Group also develops guidelines and tools needed to implement this policy. The initial follow-up actions identified are:

- developing a **decision framework** for municipal departments to determine whether or not to use a drone for a specific task; creating an **ethical framework** to weigh public values when considering drone deployment for a particular task;
- establishing **procurement conditions** for contracting specialised companies to conduct drone flights on behalf of the municipality, as well as for purchasing drones for municipal use;
- setting **standards** for operational manuals and flight plans.

Risk paragraph

In line with the recommendations of the Court of Audit's report, 'Veilig op afstand' (Safe at a Distance, [RIS320818](#)), the Drone Policy for The Hague includes an assessment and analysis of potential risks when using drones, making them a key part of decision-making. This section outlines the risks for which measures are included in this drone policy.

No.	Description	Probability	Impact	Risk	Measures (summary)
1	Unauthorised access to data collected by drones.	M	H	H	Information security risks are identified for each drone application, and the necessary measures are taken. This is in line with the Strategic Information Security Policy Framework and ensures compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including the Government Information Security Baseline 2.0, and relevant best practices such as the Cyber Security Implementation Guideline 3.4.
2	Unauthorised access to data when using drones manufactured outside the EEA.	L	H	M	Additional measures are taken for each drone application, including deploying systems to block third-party access to data.
3	Unauthorised processing of photos or video recordings of people by the municipality, caused by technical faults, incorrect use, or sabotage.	H	M	H	Drones are only used when there is a clear and justified purpose. For each drone application, a DPIA is prepared in accordance with the GDPR and the necessary measures are taken.
4	Violation of drone legislation and regulations through technical faults, incorrect use, or sabotage.	M	M	M	Drone operators are always certified. The municipality invests in its employees' knowledge and skills. The municipality complies with information security requirements to ensure the accuracy and confidentiality of information.
5	Airborne collision between a drone and a bird or other aircraft.	K	H	M	The municipality prepares operational manuals and flight plans. The necessary measures are taken for each drone flight. The municipality invests in its employees' knowledge and skills.
6	Uncontrolled descent of a drone resulting in injury or damage. This could be due to technical faults, incorrect use, or sabotage.	K	H	M	The municipality prepares operational manuals and flight plans. The necessary measures are taken for each drone flight. The municipality invests in its employees' knowledge and skills. The municipality complies with information security requirements to ensure the accuracy and confidentiality of information.
7	Opposition among residents and visitors to drone use.	M	M	M	The municipality makes as much information as possible publicly available and maintains a visible on-site presence to communicate with residents.
8	Overuse.	M	M	M	Drones are used only when there is a clear and justified purpose and demonstrable added value over alternative options to achieve the same goal.