

The London Plan: Dealing with uncertainty

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***Strengthening the Strategic Core of London Plans
in the face of New and Old Challenges***

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Areas of uncertainty with planning implications

- Population (immigration, healthcare)
- Technology (AI)
- Changes in behaviours (Covid - WfH)
- Environmental impacts of human behaviour (climate change)
- Availability and pricing of resources that underpin growth (wars, technological change)
- Events with lasting impacts (Grenfell)
- Unanticipated effects (infrastructure use)
- Underlying levels of economic growth

Dealing with uncertainty

- “In the face of genuine uncertainty, processes for responding to unforeseen events are more important than increasingly sophisticated attempts at predicting them.” (National Infrastructure Commission, May 2022)
 - Robust investments
 - Strategic bets
 - Hedging activities
 - What does this mean in practical terms?
 - Incrementalism (flood defences, rail lines)
 - Alternative use (roads)
 - Strategic bets (fibre networks, GHG removal)
- “Help to seize unexpected opportunities and insure against bets going wrong”

The best way to manage future uncertainty in the context of the London Plan?

- Use of scenarios? Easier said than done...
- Adaptive frameworks – less prescriptive land-use planning?
- Create stronger incentives to respond to change (taxation)
- Devolved powers – adjustments are felt earlier and made sooner
- Greater involvement from the private sector
- But don't lose sight of the agency of government
- All requires enhanced “intelligence” and capacity to make changes...