



*Courtesy: Alan Smithies, GLA*

## 3D Models and Desktop Tools

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- **There is a shift in planning towards greater clarity and certainty, front loading the system with easily accessible plans and codes.** At the same time there is a desire for greater engagement with the public, allowing people to shape the development of their local area through greater input at an earlier stage. Visual and desktop tools respond well to both of these drivers, bringing mapping and design alive and allowing meaningful conversation between different groups. They bring the future into the present, allowing informed decisions to be made.
- **The funding landscape has allowed innovation to develop in the sector,** through the Government's Proptech funds, GLA funding and also from companies investing in research to inform future projects, boosted by moves to digital during the pandemic. The funding and opportunity, combined with emerging gaming, streaming and virtual reality technology have enabled very realistic tools to emerge. These allow decisions to be made collaboratively and across disciplines as options can be tested live in an iterative process during meetings.
- **A key place to start in developing better tools for planning is to understand what story you are hoping to tell, what outcomes you hope to see and who your audience is.** It is worth spending some time on this, defining the problem you are looking to resolve. Tools help with the long term view, visualising what a place could be in years to come. To find the right fit with your provider you can engage the market in different ways, using early market engagement with innovation challenges or proof of concept trials before tendering for the final tool. Working with external innovators can be better, faster and cheaper than innovating all by yourself.
- **Capacity testing tools such as the Hounslow Intensification Tool or the GLA's Indicative Capacity Tool both inform and are informed by the wider strategic aspects of planning such as key parameters or coding guidelines.** They can allow different ideas to be modelled and tested quickly and easily, understanding the impact on number of homes, placemaking and amenity. These can then form the basis for discussions at a project level down the line.



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- **A key benefit of 3D and desktop tools is that they can benefit multiple audiences at different parts of the planning and project process and can also create efficiencies for other local authority teams.** Some upskilling is needed with crossovers between place making disciplines and technology know how, however while low level changes are made in house, more widespread changes can be made by the original technology provider.

## **Speakers:**

**David Edge**, Director, Arup

**Alan Smithies**, Senior Strategic Planner, GLA

**Louisa Facchino-Stack**, Principal Urban Design Project Officer, LB Hounslow

**Dr Walid Omeir**, Principal Urban Designer, LB Hounslow

**Paul Oesten-Creasey**, Chief Technology Officer, VUCITY

**Gareth Sumner**, Commercial Innovation Lead, TfL

**Attendees: 58**