

Eight principles for effective and ambitious strategies for urban infrastructure



Vision: An infrastructure strategy should demonstrate an ambitious, yet realistic long-term vision that sets the trajectory for future change. Cities should develop an infrastructure strategy based around achieving their vision, rather than the other way around.



Scope: Scoping sets clear boundaries within which the strategy will be developed. An infrastructure strategy might involve neighbouring authorities and is likely to consider issues beyond infrastructure, such as health and wellbeing, inclusion, environment and the economy.



Engage and consult: Some of the most successful infrastructure plans and strategies have emerged from processes that have sought to engage and build consensus, including with internal colleagues, external stakeholders and across political parties. Insufficient engagement is the biggest risk to the plan not getting traction.



Evidence: Cities will need a range of evidence sources about their existing assets, future needs and the benefits of intervention to inform their strategies. Collecting evidence might be as much about analysing and modelling existing data as it is about commissioning wholly new datasets.



Options: Cities should consider a wide range of options for meeting their objectives. Not considering options risks missing solutions that might offer better social value. Options such as maintenance, regulation and pricing are often more cost-effective and efficient than building new infrastructure.



Test: The strategy should be adaptable to uncertainties and risk. Potential interventions need to be stress tested to understand whether they are likely to cope with a range of future outcomes and sifted to consider their acceptability, effectiveness, feasibility, deliverability and affordability.



Prioritise: An infrastructure strategy should not be an unachievable wish list. The priorities for action should be clearly identified and linked to the objectives. The best schemes may be those that are part of a longer term direction of travel, even if they do not have the best return when viewed individually.



Evaluate: Proper evaluation of interventions is crucial to creating a robust evidence base which can be used to justify further investment. Cities should build in evaluation from the early stages to ensure that budget and resource is approved alongside the main schemes or interventions.