

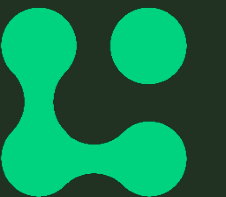
# Transforming Urban Planning with

# AI

*Practical Insights from Mecone*

PIA National Conference May 2025

# Mecone



# Acknowledgement of Country

*Mecone acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today.*

*Mecone pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.*



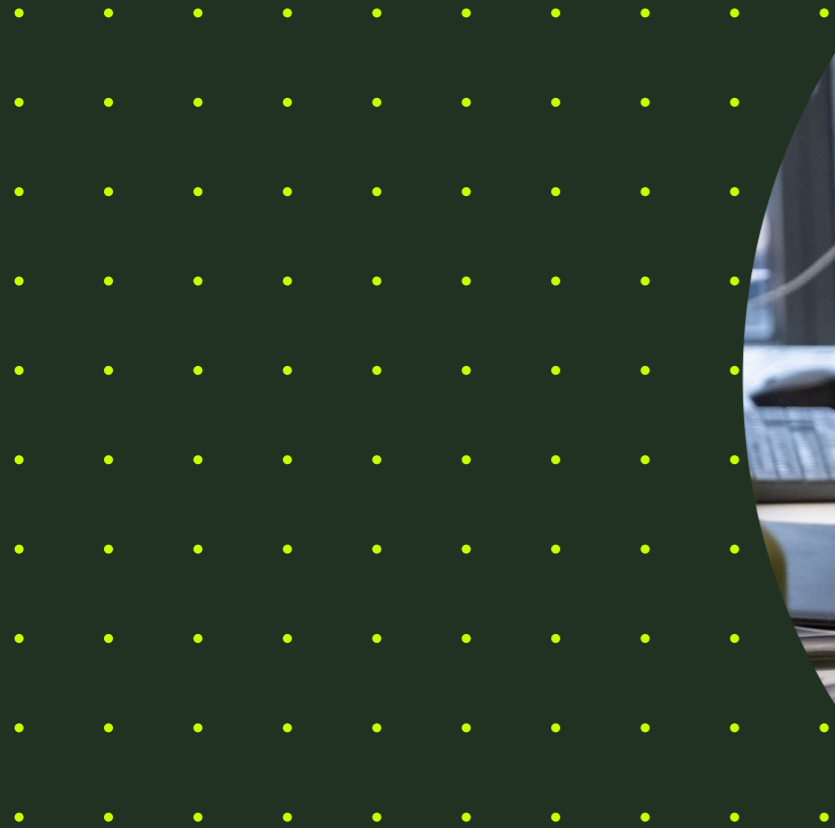
# Presentation Overview



- **About Mecone**
- **Innovation in Action**
  - MOSAIC AI (video)
  - Mecone Flow (video)
- **Navigating the AI Journey**
  - Overcoming Barriers
  - Hype & Expectation Management
  - Digital Transformation Horizons
  - Procurement and Roles
  - Risk
- **Closing Remarks**



# Introduction About Mecone



# Our Services



## Urban Planning

Our adept team of planners offer statutory planning, strategic planning, precinct planning advice, development assessment, and community needs analysis services to help our clients realise their project vision and goals



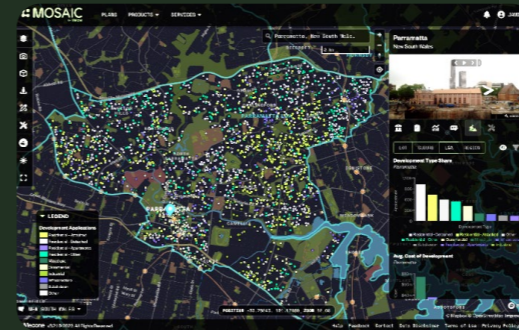
## Environmental Planning

Mecone's environmental planners deliver strategies and effective solutions to facilitate project approvals and advance responsible developments.



## Policy & Analytics

As trusted government advisors, Mecone's expert policy and analytics team provide a diversity of planning services to public sector clientele. We offer evidence-based strategic advice, backed by expert data analytics.



## Plantech

Our Plantech stream offers highly effective data and technology tools and resources, to facilitate the development of urban and regional planning solutions.

Backed by leading technology, we assist our clients in making informed urban policy and planning decisions that give them a technical and analytical edge.



## Social Planning

Our in-house social planning team has extensive experience in delivering social impact assessment and community engagement programs. This includes supporting SSD approval for affordable and community housing projects.

# The Mecone Way



## OUR APPROACH

Senior level involvement **every step** of the way

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We **ditch the fluff**

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Great partnerships, **lasting success**

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We celebrate the **little and big wins**



## OUR STANDARDS

**Quality reporting** that everyone can understand

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We **hit deadlines** and get it done, no excuses

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Clear scope and transparent pricing, with **no ugly surprises**

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Timely updates and swift responses to **keep you informed**



## OUR IMPACT

We're leading the planning industry, always **ahead of the curve**

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We take an active role in a **sustainable urban future**

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We make complex planning **easy**

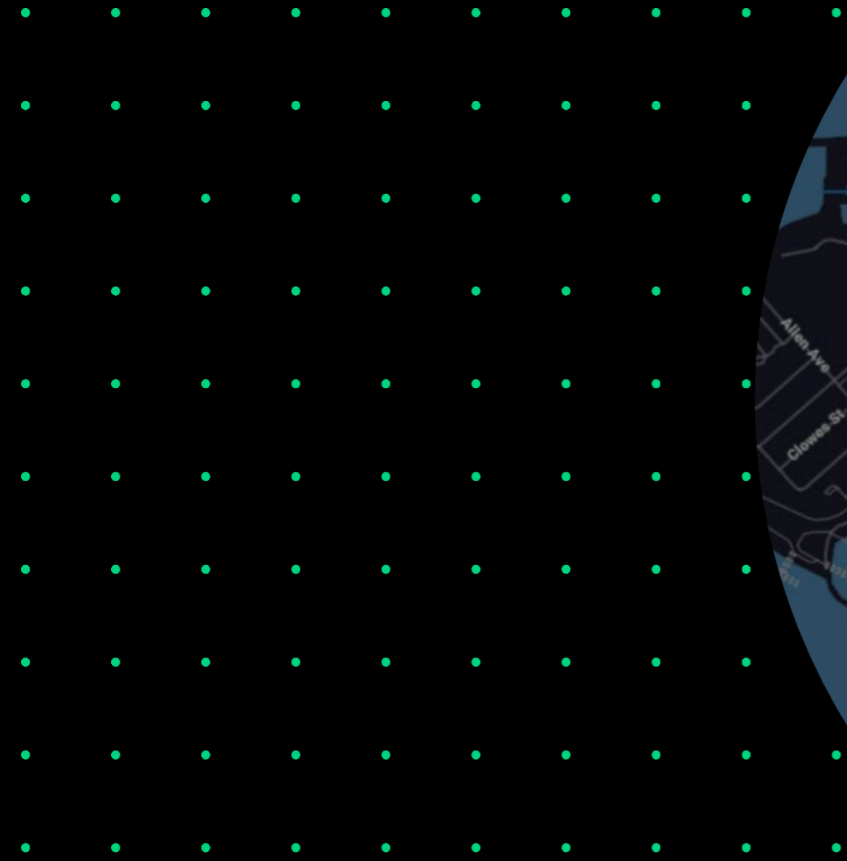
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We're **outcome focused** and love to get you the results



# MOSAIC

By Mecone



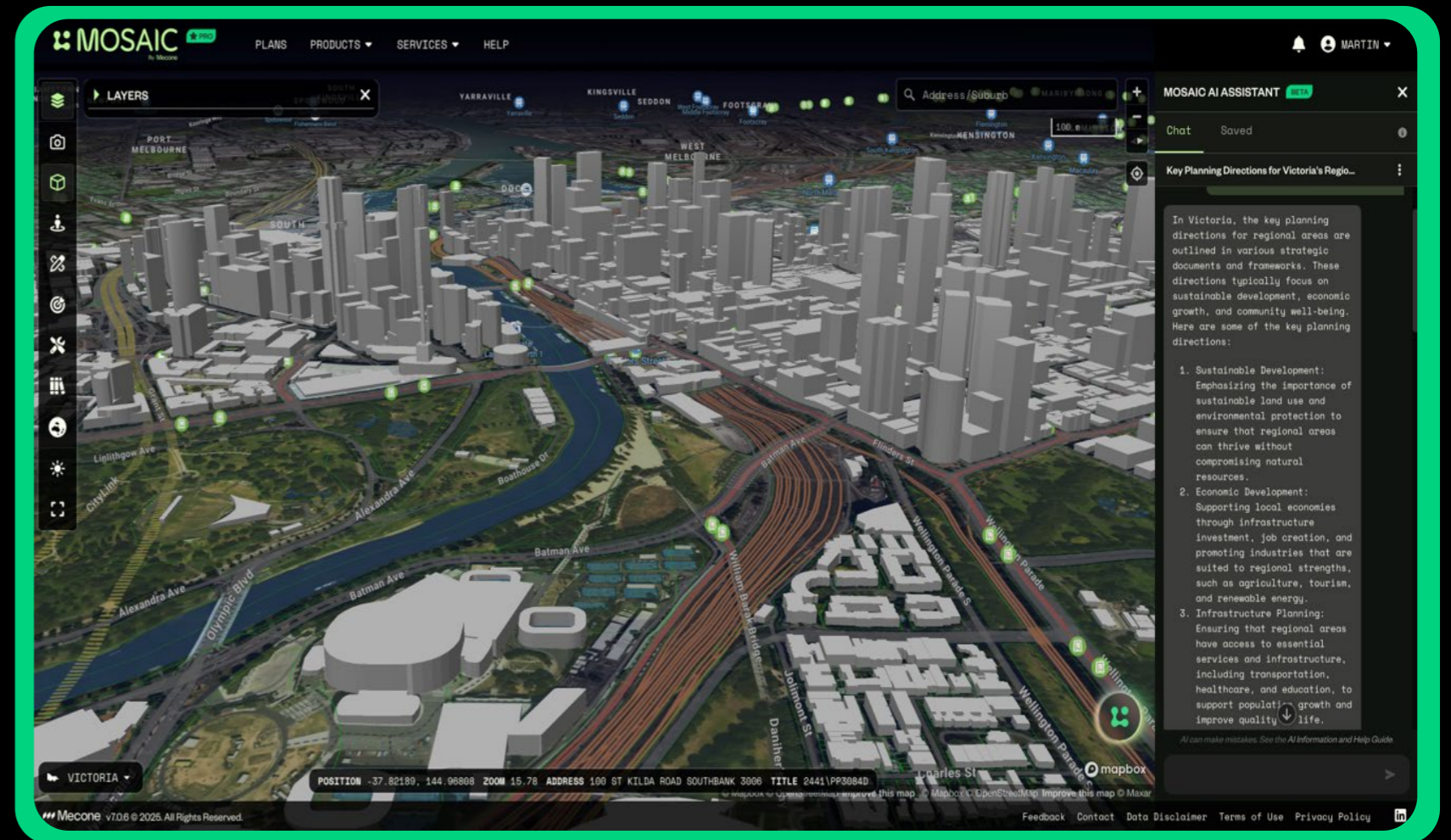
# Mecone MOSAIC AI Chatbot (Beta)



Integrated into MOSAIC, retrieves information from MOSAIC's extensive planning data lake into language-based responses,

Mecone's planning chatbot is an expert planning navigator, content creator, statistical analysts and valuable assistant.

*Release Date: January 2025 (MOSAIC v7.0).*







# FLOW

by Mecone



**Get into the Flow**

Smarter reporting for better urban planning.

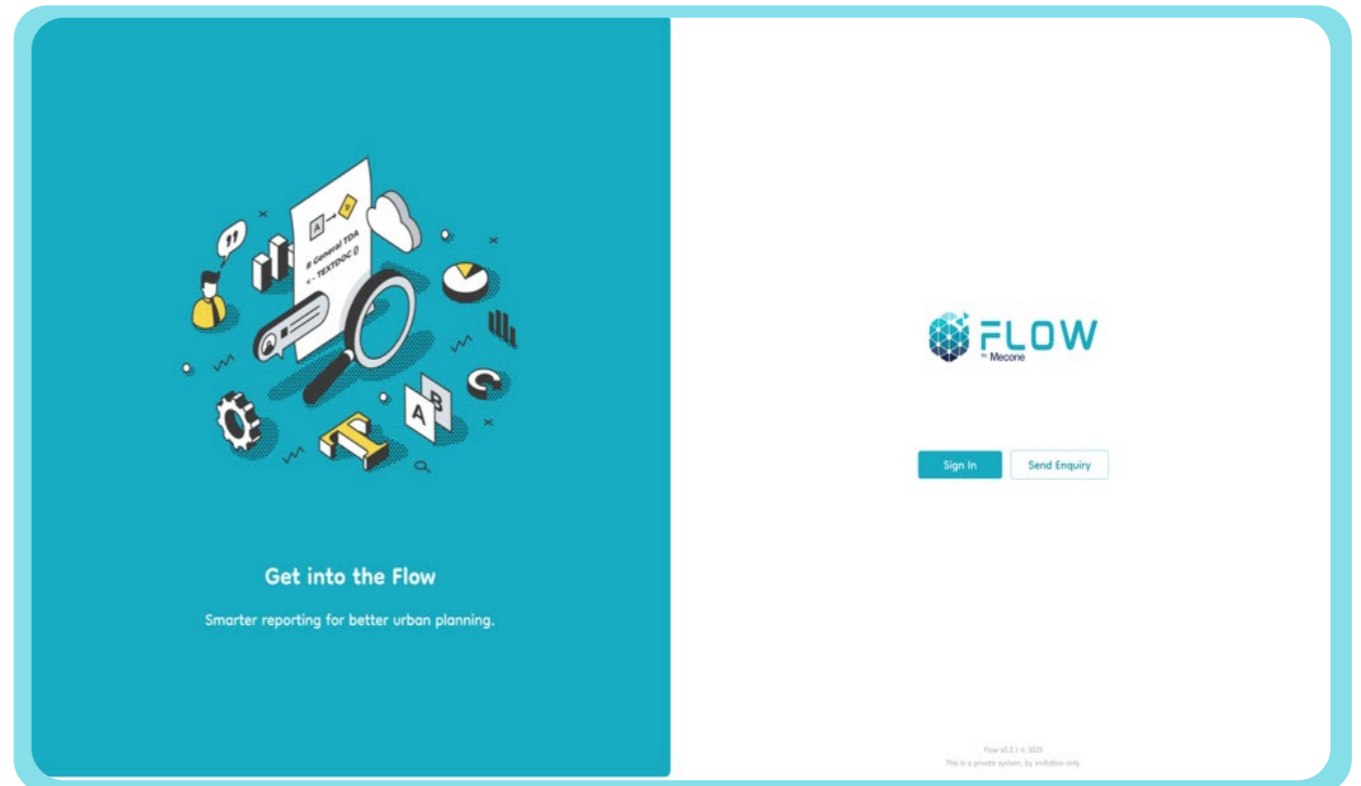
# Mecone Flow: AI – Assisted Reports



## AUTOMATE, ASSIST, AND ENHANCE PLANNING REPORTS

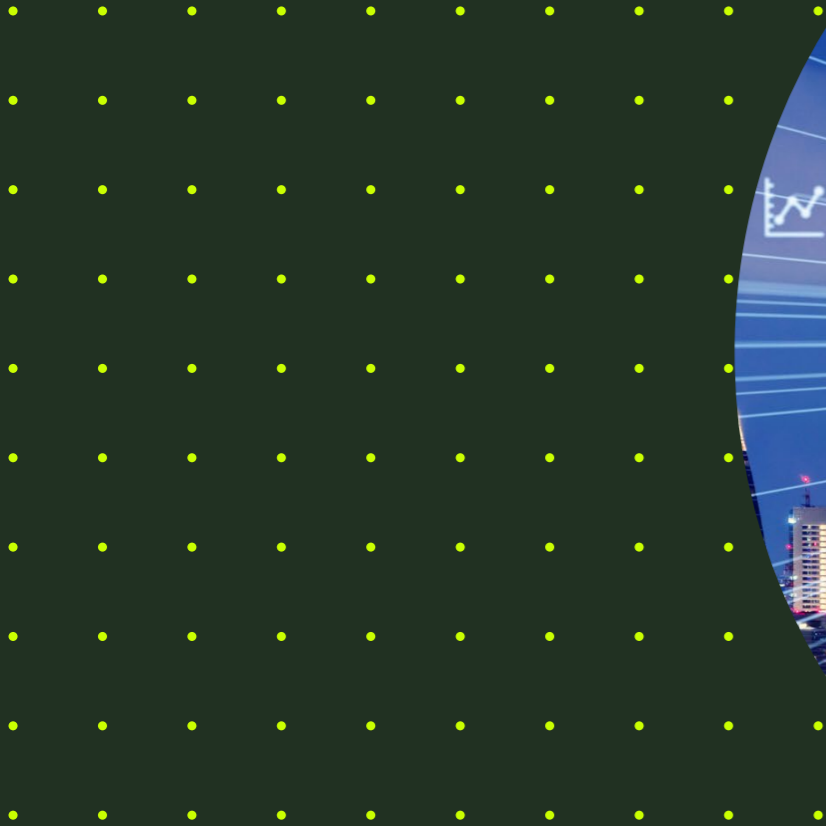
Mecone Flow is an AI-assisted tool that streamlines planning report preparation, enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and compliance while keeping planners in control.

- Automated report generation with planner oversight.
- Ensures compliance with AS 42001:2023 AI Management Systems.
- Takes out the drudgery & allows planners to focus on key issues.





# Overcoming Barriers to AI Adoption in Urban Planning Offices



# Barriers to AI Adoption



## EXPECTATION: “CAN AI DO....”

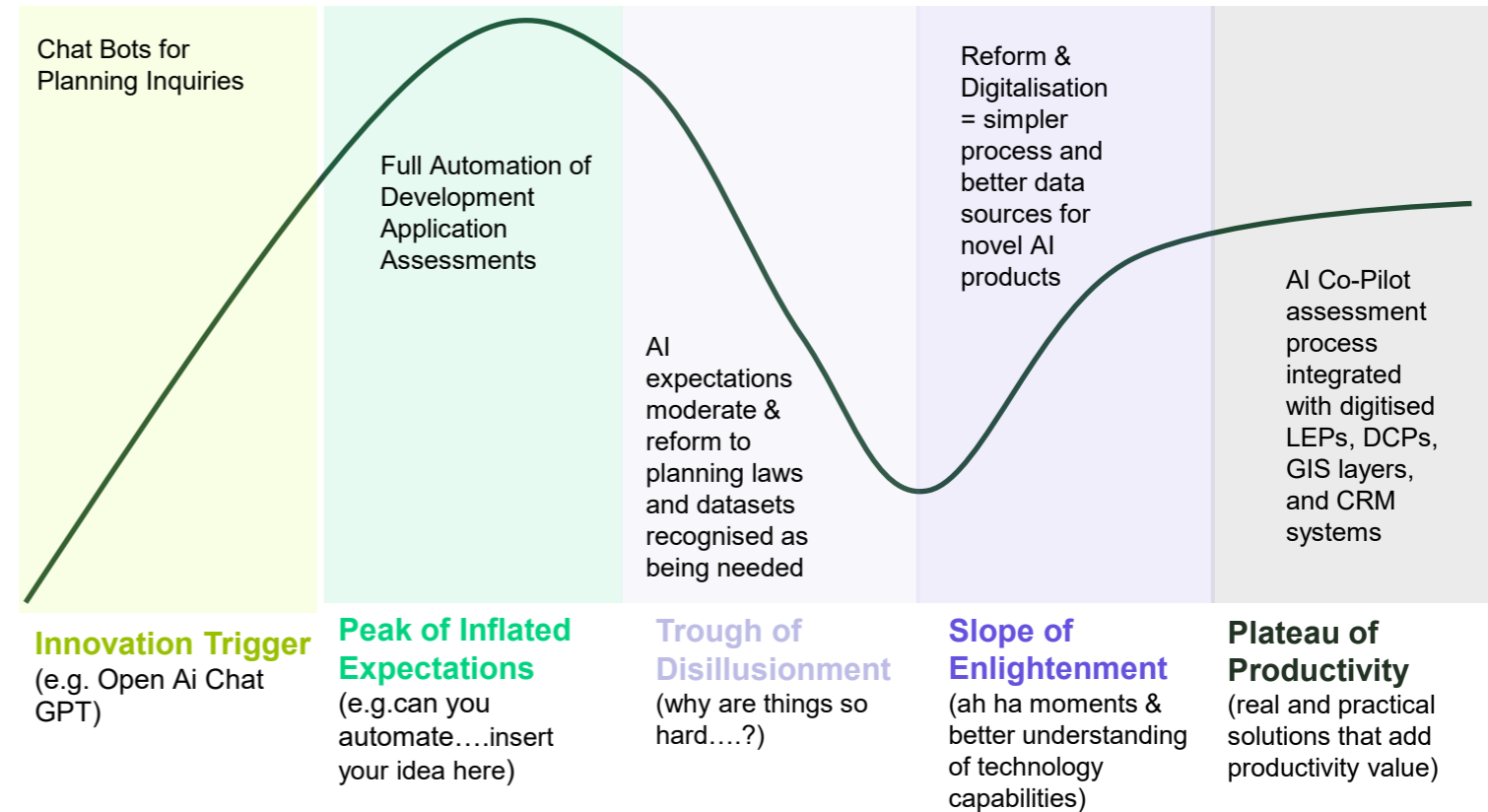
AI today is where mobile phones were before apps - full of potential, but early in its lifecycle.

Large Language Models (LLMs) are **language tools**, not visual ones. They don't “see” zoning maps, visual design controls or architectural plans like a human planner does.

A common expectation is that AI will soon conduct full cycle planning assessments. AI LLMs is better at **processing and generating natural language**, retrieving complex information, and assisting with reasoning.

**Tip:** Apply AI as a communications tool and ask yourself – what is realistic and how much do I want to invest to learn and develop this technology?

## Gartner Emerging Tech Hype Cycle (1995)



# Barriers to AI Adoption –where’s the road map?



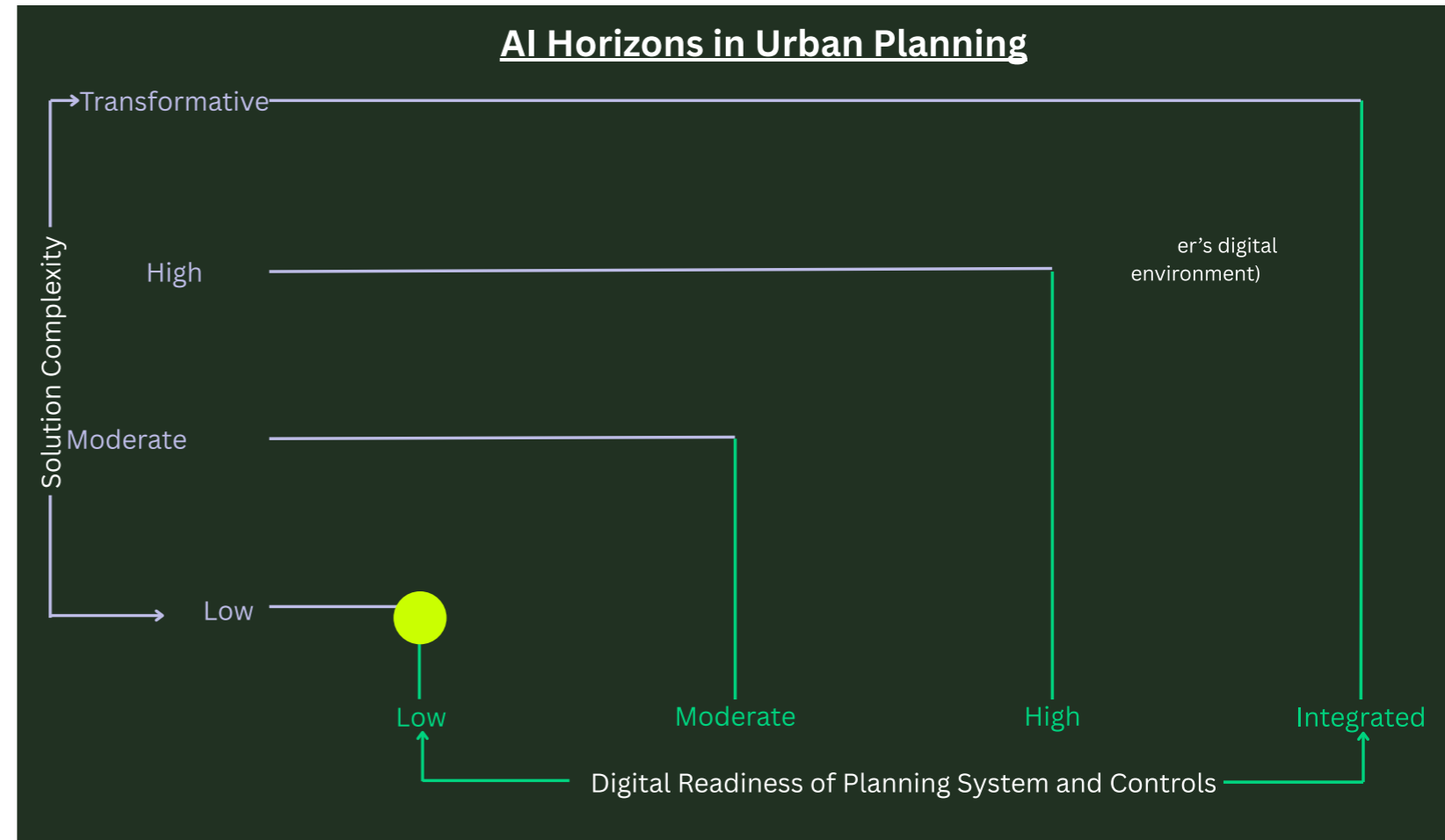
## EXPECTATION: “TRANSFORM AND INTEGRATE NOW...”

Riding the AI wave presents a once in a generation opportunity for digital transformation of urban planning.

However early implementation of AI in planning is best approached as an **experimental journey**, not a quest for transformation at day one.

The mindset must also shift from “get it right” to “learn as we go.”

AI in urban planning would have a stronger chance if broken into **manageable horizons** based on your digital readiness and maturity; and complexity of the solution you are seeking to achieve.



# Barriers to AI Adoption



## EXPECTATION: THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN LEAD IT ALL... AND SO TOO CAN THE ITC TEAMS.

Traditional ITC procurement models demand high certainty, low variability and fixed costs – they are typically ill-suited for emerging and new technologies.

AI in urban planning at this stage, should be treated as an **R&D** procurement challenge – small scale projects, reverse briefs, early contractor involvement (ECIs) and hybrid public private partnerships that evoke shared responsibility and accountability approaches will work best.

There is also a human side to this challenge. The planning industry have long underinvested in digital transformation projects - we have catching up to do because:

- we are significantly behind other industries in technology and data applications and maturity for AI to be useful – we have siloed ourselves off.
- we have notable skills and capability gaps in application of data and technology in Urban Planning fields – skills are in other industries.

To digitally transform with AI, planners must begin to understand the nuances of data and technology, and the technologist must understand the nuances of urban planning.

Successful AI adoption will come from people and Executive teams who can bridge these two disciplines into one ecosystem.



# Risks Allocation

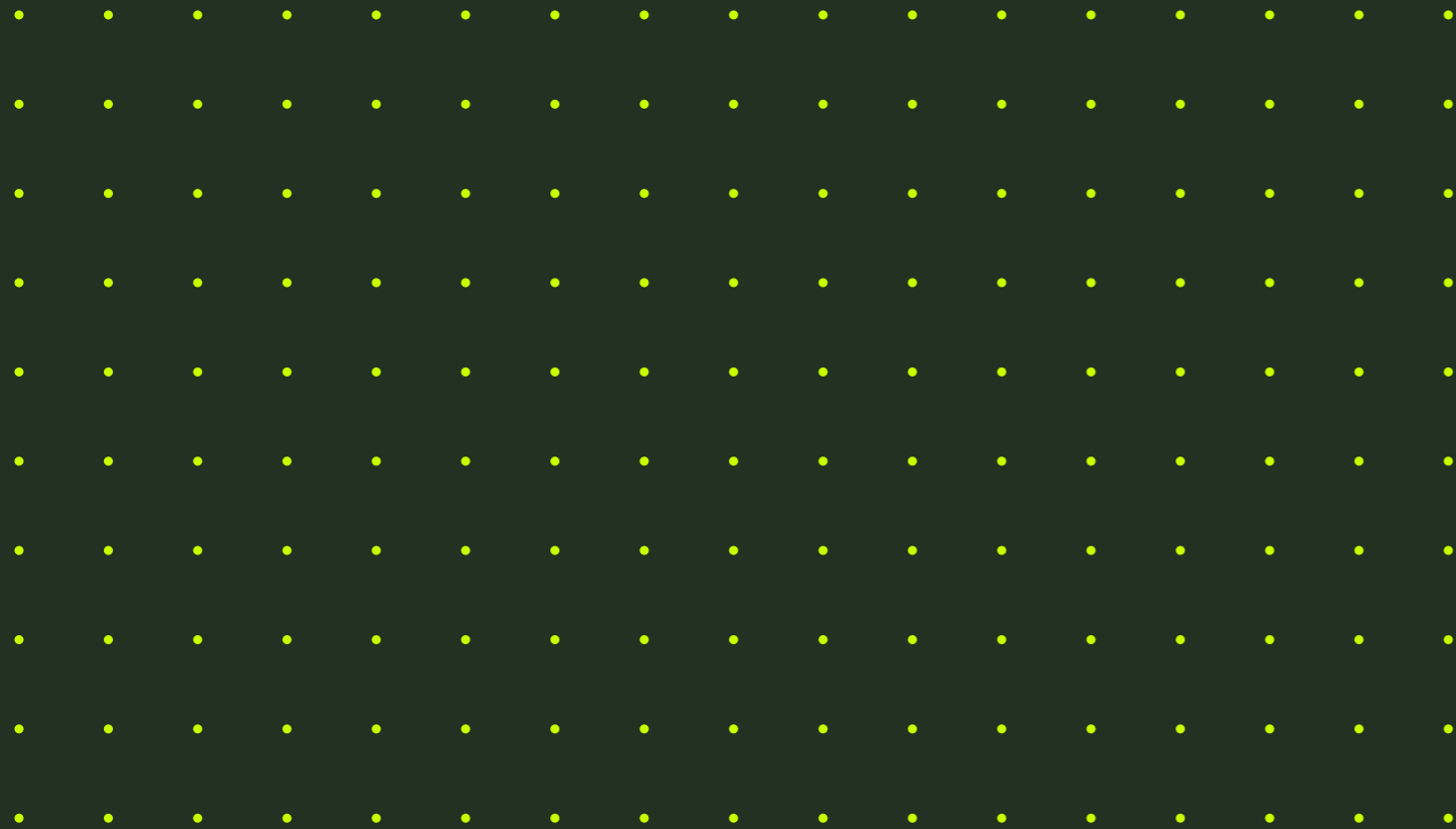


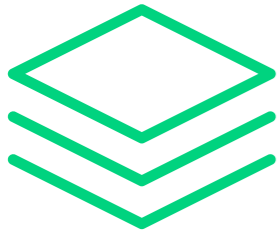
## EXPECTATION: WE CAN AVOID RISKS ENTIRELY?

- Risks should be allocated based on expertise, legal accountability, and technical capability.
- Avoid placing all risks on AI suppliers when the data quality, digital system environment or statutory planning controls are controlled by the public client.
- Placing all these components either entirely on Public sector or Private organisation will increase the likelihood of PlanTech project failures, including AI failures.

Risk	Public	Private
AI Model Development	✗	✓
AI Model Integration	✗	✓
AI Token/AI Costs	✓	✗
Back-end Hosting, Auth, SSO	✓	✗
Digitisation of Planning Codes & Controls	✓	✗
Front-end Web Development	✗	✓
Web Hosting & Front-end Maintenance	✗	✓
Back-end ETLs & Data Maintenance	✓	✗
User Onboarding	✗	✓
Upskilling of Internal Capabilities	✓	✗
AI Governance & Control Documentation	✓	✗
Integration into Legacy IT Systems	✓	✗
AI Output Accuracy & Bias Mitigation	✓	✓
Compliance with Planning Law	✓	✗
Ethical Oversight & Transparency	✓	✗
AI Maintenance & Continuous Tuning	✗	✓
Cybersecurity & Privacy	✓	✓
Third-party Dependencies (APIs, Libraries)	✓	✓
End-User Adoption & Change Management	✓	✓

# Closing Remarks





The path to AI integration in urban planning is not linear - it's layered, incremental, and highly context-sensitive.



Managing expectations, structuring development in clear horizons, and designing procurement and partnerships to match the experimental nature of AI technology, planners and technologists can and will unlock its potential.



The key is to begin with clear, *modest* goals - then build, test, refine, and grow to the next horizon. If done well, AI can and will return significant time and productivity gains to planners, clarify planning complexity for communities, and bring digital transformation to a field that sorely needs it.



In the planning world, AI should be there to augment and add capacity not replace people. Focus should be on making the process more efficient not trying to do complex planning tasks such as merit tests, development assessment or justification of variations.

# Thank you

