

Boris Johnson sets out his '2020 vision for London'

Mayor calls for greater financial autonomy, more investment in transport and the right for councils to borrow to build new homes

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Boris Johnson launches his 2020 Vision for London at City Hall. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

Boris Johnson has set out a highly personal and grand vision for **London** in 2020, urging greater financial autonomy for the city and the right for local councils to borrow to build extra homes.

In an optimistic 80-page document setting out the new growth areas, Johnson warns the capital will reach an all-time population high of 8.7 million in 2016, approaching 10 million by 2030.

The mayor's London vision is bound to be examined both for a sense of Johnson's politics and also even what the Conservative 2015 manifesto may look like. But it is also a warning to the chancellor, George Osborne, not to cut grants to London in the coming spending review for 2015-16.

Johnson, who is meeting Osborne on Tuesday night, repeated his warning that cuts would jeopardise the capital's infrastructure. He said: "It would be a great mistake to assume that the great Olympic city no longer needs sustained investment."

Johnson, – who batted away a stream of questions about his political future – said population growth would require at least another 450,000 jobs in the next 10 years and a further 400,000 homes. Overall, he suggests London would need another 1m homes by the mid-2030s.

He writes: "The main reason talented people choose to work in London is the 'vibe'; and though there is not much that politicians can do to create the 'vibe', they can create the conditions for these good vibrations".

Johnson sets out a series of policy grabs including the proposed devolution of rail franchising power to the mayor to develop an efficient suburban rail service, allowing London to keep the proceeds of stamp duty tax and freeing councils to borrow to build homes.

On the right to borrow for housebuilding, he argues "since the public sector clearly gains a bankable asset there is no need for this to appear on the books as public borrowing".

He also proposes a "use it or lose it" system of planning permission. "Those developers who are sitting idly on their land should be threatened with compulsory purchase," he writes.

Johnson said: "After the wretched decades of the mid-20th century – when investment in transport was stifled – we are now back in what some (the optimists) would call a golden age. We are in the throes of a neo-Victorian surge of investment in mass transit. It is absolutely vital that we do not stop."

He claims the capital's transport system is over-stretched, with some tube lines at risk of "breaching EU regulations for the carriage of live animals".

He promises to increase automation on the tube to 75% by 2020, to bolster the tube service on the Victoria and Jubilee lines to 40 trains per hour, support a new river crossing to the east of the Dartford crossing, and start construction of Crossrail 2 in 2019.

He writes: "The question about Crossrail 2 is not whether it should happen, but how quickly we can get it moving. It is becoming clear that the timetable could be integrated into Crossrail 1, so that the second line begins more or less as the first is finished."

He also comes out in favour of flyunders, as opposed to flyovers. "Now is the time to look at the achievement of other cities where 'flyunders' have helped to reintroduce calm, removed pollution, and added massively to property values", he writes.

He also claims since "London is still one of the greatest financial capitals on earth, and there is absolutely no point in bashing or vindictively regulating an industry that generates £63bn in taxation. London has the right time zone, the right language and the critical mass of talent to be the best place in which to raise finance in the global economy – a function that will always be necessary as long as the world operates a free market economy.

"London is now poised to extend its role in bond markets, and has been chosen by the Chinese authorities as a prime centre for offshore renminbi trading. London is the place where Indian telecoms companies buy African mobile phone companies."

In the only downbeat section of the report Johnson also sets out problems with London schools saying "it is a melancholy fact that in 2012 there were 15,000 London kids who left primary school, age 11, still struggling with basic English and maths. One of London's great advantages is that we have mastery of the world's language - and it is a savage reproach to us all that we are failing to pass that advantage on to so many of our children."

He says London has moved on "from the Pol Pot approach of the 1960s and 1970s, when academically outstanding schools were extirpated, under both governments, as a matter of state policy. Since the reforms of the last Labour government we have entered a new era of diversity and hope."

But he warns that so great is the demographic pressure that from a starting point of 2011, London will need an extra 4,000 primary classes by 2020. He writes: "In some of those classes we want an atmosphere as industrious (and downright swotty) as the very best in the rising Asian economies; and yet that will of course not work for all."



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