

Britain doesn't have a growth problem. It has a planning problem.

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The [British Chambers of Commerce](#) has just warned that economic growth in England is being held back by a planning system that is “too slow, under-resourced and unpredictable” and that it’s acting as a handbrake on investment.

Anyone who has tried to build, refurbish or repurpose a building in the last few years will recognise that description immediately.

I have experienced this personally in West London, a small building which would provide 10 flats and some workspace. Can't go through PD, and it's been an expensive nightmare.

The BCC is calling for a fundamental change in how planning authorities operate, asking for more planners, faster decisions, clear timetables and fast-track routes for projects that deliver growth.

At the moment, the reality is that “13-week” targets exist mostly on paper; under-staffed planning departments are overwhelmed by volume, Performance Agreements and extensions that turn months into years and make a nonsense of the statistics as per a previous post of mine.



For investors and developers, the message is simple: you cannot price uncertainty.

You can price risk, you can price construction cost, you can price capex for ESG upgrades. What you can't price is an open-ended, under-resourced system where a relatively simple scheme can take 12–24 months to get to a decision.

And this isn't just about new housing. When planning is this slow and unpredictable, we delay the delivery of modern offices and lab space, hold back regeneration of high streets and town centres and undermine the very growth ministers say they want.

Capital goes where it is wanted. In planning terms, we are still sending out very mixed signals.

If we're serious about growth, levelling up, and housing supply, we have to stop treating planning as secondary and start treating it as critical economic infrastructure.