

BCC: New planning strategy must deliver real change

Commenting on the new version of the National Planning Policy Framework, Jane Gratton, Head of Business Environment at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“Planning revolutions have often been promised, but usually turn out to be a false dawn, given that businesses report that it never seems to get easier, faster, or cheaper to secure planning permissions and crack on with development.

“The last time the government upended the planning system six years ago, the framework was slimmed down, but the bureaucracy, delays and cost were not. This time things must be different.

“Business will welcome measures to increase house building, which will provide much needed homes for the workforce, stimulate the construction sector and boost many other firms across supply chains.

“Building new garden towns and villages in areas of greatest need is sustainable and sensible, but this must not come at the expense of housing growth in other less vibrant parts of the country. To rebalance the economy, the new housing rules must not allow councils to scale back housing targets in areas with economic growth potential.

“Investors, councils – and indeed local communities – have all been guilty of finding reasons why developments should not take place. The policy changes need to speed up the process, remove blockages in the system and, above all, bring about a change of mindset to get more quality homes built faster.

“There’s often a gap between rhetoric and reality when it comes to planning decision-making. If well-resourced and experienced, councils can deliver quality and consistent decision-making, but they must also be willing to implement agreed policy, even if that causes local unpopularity.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

A BCC survey in June 2017 found that five years on from the introduction of the NPPF, 27% of businesses say there has been no change in making the planning system easier to engage with, 20% believe it is more difficult to deal with, and 15% believe it is now easier to engage with.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world.

For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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