

THE  TIMES

## Planning deterrent

**But if we wish this country to remain internationally competitive we must tackle head on the sluggish pace and disproportionate costs of planning**

Sir, There are plenty of reasons why more firms invest in the UK than any other destination in Europe — not least our flexible highly skilled workforce, world-class universities, and unparalleled links both to the Continent and to the States. But there is one British institution that actively deters investment: our creaking planning system is increasingly driving investors away and putting the brakes on UK businesses that want to expand.

We have all seen worthwhile, job-creating projects killed off by a system where the presumption is “no”. Even when permission is granted it can take years to deliver a decision on vital pieces of infrastructure. And as the BCC’s recent survey shows, more than seven in ten businesses find that they are locked out of local debates about planning.

It is right to value and protect green spaces. Nobody is talking about building on the green belt or in the many areas of outstanding natural beauty. And it is right to ensure local communities have their say. But if we wish this country to remain internationally competitive, if we want the jobs and prosperity that growth brings, we must tackle head on the sluggish pace and disproportionate costs of planning.

As business owners and managers, in a personal capacity we welcome the government’s reforms. We know that delivering faster decisions at a lower cost will help us invest. Which means that anyone who wants to see more jobs and growth in this country should welcome these reforms too.

Duncan Bannatyne  
Chairman, Bannatyne Group

Robert Bensoussan  
Chairman, LK Bennett

Simon Blagden  
Chairman, Fujitsu Telecommunications  
Europe Ltd

Neil Clifford  
Chief Executive, Kurt Geiger

Peter Cullum  
Executive Chairman, Towergate

Ron Dennis  
Executive Chairman, McLaren

Tej Dhillon  
Chairman, Dhillon Group  
Sir Christopher Gent  
Chairman, GlaxoSmithKline plc

Michael Gutman  
Managing Director, Westfield Group

Brent Hoberman  
Chairman, made.com

Luke Johnson  
Chairman, Risk Capital Partners LLP

**Ian Livingston**  
Chief Executive Officer, BT Group

**Charlie Mullins**  
Managing Director, Pimlico Plumbers

**Alistair McGeorge**  
Executive Chairman, New Look

**Sir Stuart Rose**

**Tim Steiner**  
Founder & CEO, Ocado

**Ted Tuppen**  
Chief Executive, Enterprise Inns

**Moni Varma**  
Chairman, Veetee Food Group

**Tom Wells**  
Vice Chairman, Charles Wells

**Nick Wheeler**  
CEO, Charles Tyrwhitt

**Simon Wolfson**  
Chief Executive, Next