



UK Government

THE UK'S MODERN INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

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Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade
by Command of His Majesty
Department for Business and Trade

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Removing planning barriers and accelerating infrastructure

Infrastructure provides the foundations high-growth sectors need to innovate, grow, and compete globally. Digital infrastructure is crucial for almost every aspect of doing business and will underpin the AI revolution. Energy networks and renewable energy developments are vital for energy security and net zero and can have a decisive impact on the competitiveness of businesses across the economy.⁴⁹ Businesses rely on transport infrastructure to move their products and access talent.

Investment in infrastructure is critical but the UK has not seen enough of it. Too many investors have a perception of the UK as a place where it is hard to get anything built – too slow, uncertain, and expensive. Too few publicly funded projects have been committed to and too few have been completed. Demand for infrastructure is rising but the ease of delivery needs to improve. Policy uncertainty over the last 20 years has played a part, as has the planning system, often acting as a blocker to growth. According to Boston Consulting Group, large infrastructure projects spend an average of 65 months in pre-construction, and delivery time increased by nearly two thirds between 2012 and 2021.⁵⁰ Respondents to the formal *Invest 2035* consultation told us that planning permission, delays and complexity were a barrier to investment in infrastructure.



The approach

We are driving forward ambitious reforms to the planning system in England will get Britain building, having set a target of building 1.5 million new homes and making planning decisions on 150 major infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament.⁵¹ The Office for Budget Responsibility has forecast that housebuilding measures set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will add £6.8 billion to the economy by 2029/30.⁵² This is even before the reforms brought forward through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill are factored in, which we estimate could boost the economy by up to £7.5 billion over the next decade.⁵³

We will:

- **Ensure that the planning framework supports growth in our eight priority sectors, as reflected in the revised NPPF.** This prioritisation will be further embedded when we consult on a set of national policies to guide planning decisions later this year. We will work closely with the devolved governments to ensure that our planning reforms positively impact growth across the nations.
- **Provide greater certainty, confidence, and stability through our 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy,** ensuring that infrastructure is planned and designed well and delivered quickly and efficiently to meet growing demand from important sectors.

The interventions

To deliver this we will:

- **Fast-track more projects through the planning process**, by:
 - **Increasing certainty** for gigafactories, laboratories, and data centres – crucial commercial opportunities in the IS-8 – by allowing them to ‘opt in’ to be designated as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.
 - **Reducing the average pre-application period** for major infrastructure projects from two years to 12 months by scrapping overly burdensome consultation requirements. This has the potential to save projects £1 billion over the course of this Parliament, benefiting the IS-8 by accelerating delivery of major transport and energy infrastructure.⁵⁴
 - **Launching a Call for Evidence on the expansion of permitted development rights** to support specific building works and speed up the construction of our national infrastructure, including fixed and mobile networks and electricity networks.
 - **Streamlining processes for judicial reviews** so that claimants have just one attempt to challenge a development consent decision for claims deemed totally without merit, rather than three.
- **Establishing AI Growth Zones** as dedicated hubs to fast-track AI infrastructure development, support planning approvals, and unlock access to energy.
- **Make timely planning decisions**, with a 13-week target for decisions made by Ministers on called-in applications. This is giving greater confidence to businesses that decisions on high-priority developments, from solar farms and data centres to housing and transport, are being made speedily and supported by a more strategic planning policy framework.
- **Improve the responsiveness of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs)**. We are providing funding for 300 new planning officers and offering new flexibilities for planning application fees to be set locally so they cover the costs of the service. We are also accelerating digitalisation to encourage the development and adoption of the next generation of planning services. We have worked with LPAs to co-create user-friendly planning application software to speed up planning decisions. This includes PlanX services, which have reduced both application inaccuracies and the number of planning-related calls by up to 60%.⁵⁵
- **Save developers time and money** by implementing a Nature Restoration Fund which will mean that in many cases they can make a single payment to identify and meet their environmental obligations related to protected sites and species, reducing existing burdens for the IS-8 (as well as other sectors)

while delivering gains for nature. This scheme is subject to the passage of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, currently before Parliament.

- **Provide long-term certainty on the UK's infrastructure needs and delivery**, so that investors can take long-term decisions. We have set out our approach in full in our 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy, complementing our Industrial Strategy, and in summer 2025 we will publish a pipeline of infrastructure projects that the Government is prioritising. Under the National Infrastructure Spatial Tool programme we are also working to understand local infrastructure needs, based on housing, industrial growth, and land use scenarios, to strengthen evidence for place-based infrastructure investment decisions. Future iterations of the tool will provide a consistent means for central and local government to test how policies, strategies, and decisions interact spatially with infrastructure and to capture spatial trade-offs, with the ambition of providing better evidence on where infrastructure can make the most significant contributions to economic growth.
- **Remove barriers to digital infrastructure deployment**, including by implementing the outstanding provisions in the Product Security and Telecommunications Act 2022. We will also bring forward a more flexible permitting system for street works across England if ongoing trials are successful, make it easier to deploy broadband in flats, and launch a Call for Evidence on changes to planning laws that could enable faster rollouts of fixed and mobile coverage.
- **Help business travellers be more productive with improved Wi-Fi access.** By spending £41 million to introduce low-earth-orbit satellite connectivity on all mainline trains, we will significantly improve both the availability and internet connection speeds for Wi-Fi-connected passengers, in turn enabling a better-integrated transport network.
- **Improve connectivity by investing in new transport infrastructure across England and Wales during this Spending Review period**, with:
 - Delivering major rail projects such as East-West Rail, the Transpennine Route Upgrade, HS2, and infrastructure in Wales, and taking forward work on Northern Powerhouse Rail, as well as renewal and maintenance of the existing network.
 - £24 billion of capital funding between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to maintain and improve motorways and local roads across the country.
 - £15.6 billion up to 2031/23 for some of England's largest city regions to improve transport connectivity via the Transport for City Regions settlements, and £2.3 billion funding for the Local Transport Grant to improve transport connectivity in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas.
 - £900 million per year to maintain and improve bus services. Illustrative industry analysis suggests that public investment in bus infrastructure and services can generate returns of up to £4.55 for every £1 invested.⁵⁶
 - £400 million to support the roll-out of charging infrastructure across the country, including to facilitate the deployment of zero emission vans and HGVs.