



Association for Rental Living: Investor Roundtable on the Building Safety Act with Dame Judith Hackitt

This roundtable was made possible through the generous support of Dame Judith Hackitt, leading investors in the Build-to-Rent (BTR) sector, and the collaborative efforts of the Association for Rental Living, Rund, and Willis Towers Watson.

On 30 October 2025, senior UK real estate investors and lenders convened with Dame Judith Hackitt at an ARL-hosted closed roundtable to discuss the practical realities of the Building Safety Act (BSA) and the future of safe, high-quality, and resilient residential development. The conversation acknowledged the Act as a necessary response to systemic failures in design, procurement and construction highlighted in the aftermath of Grenfell. It also recognised the BSA as a catalyst for long-term cultural change, shifting the industry away from lowest-cost delivery and towards whole-life quality, technical competence, and accountability.

While strong support for the Act's purpose was evident, participants were clear that the industry remains in a challenging transition phase. The sentiment expressed was not resistance to regulation, but frustration at operational delays, lack of clarity, and inconsistent regulatory interpretation — particularly around Gateway 2. Extended approval timelines of up to 30–40 weeks, with limited dialogue, are creating programme risk, depressing viability, and slowing capital deployment. This has, in some cases, driven investment toward lower-rise schemes that sit outside the new regime, despite the appetite and need to deliver high-density rental housing in urban areas.

Dame Judith Hackitt reiterated her long-standing principle that *“a safe building is a sound investment”*, emphasising the inseparable link between resident safety, asset performance and long-term investment value. She challenged investors to lead the cultural shift by demanding quality, competence and transparency across the supply chain and throughout the life of a building. In her view, institutional capital has a unique role in setting expectations and rewarding organisations that embrace a safety culture, while withdrawing support from those who do not.

Investors echoed this call for leadership, agreeing that the BSA can and should accelerate this cultural shift. However, success requires predictability. Participants stressed that the Act itself is not the barrier but uncertainty around implementation is.



A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the need to reward the good and penalise the bad. Participants argued that the market must visibly differentiate between compliant, high-quality operators and those who fail to meet required standards. Investors, insurers, lenders and regulators should all recognise — and financially reward — buildings that demonstrate safety, quality and clarity of information. Faster approvals, greater liquidity and stronger valuations should be available to best-in-class schemes. Conversely, poor performers should face delayed approvals, increased scrutiny and capital market disadvantage. The forthcoming Building Safety Certificate regime will be a critical mechanism to support this culture shift. Demonstrating full compliance with the Building Safety Regulator and the Building Safety Act could lead to more favourable underwriting outcomes and improved programme terms, failure to do so could limit the options available.

Dame Judith initially anticipated that investors would need persuading of the Building Safety Act's importance. In practice, investors welcome the Act and the certainty it brings on build quality, and they want to see it implemented in full. Their concern is not the Act itself, but additional delays layered onto an already bureaucratic and unpredictable development process—across planning, building control and the Building Safety Regulator. Uncertainty now dogs every stage before investment can be committed. What once took 1–2 years from proposal to start on site now takes up to 4 years. For high-risk buildings, the Act's requirements have become the “straw that broke the camel's back,” compounding existing bottlenecks rather than causing them. Our shared task is to restore certainty, confidence and predictability end-to-end—planning, building control approval, completion and regulatory interventions—so the overall timeline can be reduced from 3–4 years to 1–2 years, with greater assurance throughout.

The group also discussed the importance of education and capability-building across the value chain. From planning officers to design teams, contractors, asset managers and investors, every party involved in delivering and operating buildings must understand the BSA's requirements and their role in achieving them. Investors acknowledged their responsibility to set clear expectations at the outset of projects and embed competence in procurement processes, reinforcing that value lies in quality and safety, not lowest-bid tendering. It was also recognised that resident education forms part of this cultural transition. For the BSA to fulfil its purpose, residents must understand not only that their buildings are safe, but how safety systems work, how to report issues, and how their knowledge and information support the long-term stewardship of the building. This knowledge, transparently communicated, should translate into consumer confidence and ultimately into rental value and asset resilience.

Technology and AI were discussed as potential enablers of compliance and efficiency. Participants saw clear potential for AI-assisted plan checking, automated documentation audits, competency verification and digital site assurance. However, there was consensus that technology must support — not replace — professional competence. Digital tools can enhance consistency and accountability, but they cannot compensate for insufficient design quality, inadequate oversight or lack of regulatory engagement.

Finally, the roundtable emphasised that shared accountability is essential. The private sector stands ready to deliver the Act's objectives, but Government and the Building Safety Regulator must also meet their obligations. Timely, consistent, technically credible decision-making is critical. Regulatory performance must be visible and held to clear standards, just as industry performance is. Partnership, transparency and joint problem-solving — not adversarial enforcement — will drive the best outcomes for residents, investors and regulators alike.

The group called for:

1. Improved regulatory engagement, consistent interpretation, and greater transparency so that Gateway approvals support rather than stall development.
2. Support for a phased approval process at Gateway 2, allowing certain elements of the design to be signed off and construction to commence in stages. Thus mitigating critical-path risk, align approvals with procurement cycles, and maintaining regulatory rigour while restoring commercial practicality.
3. Alongside procedural reform, a new emphasis on standardisation. Variability in design information, digital documentation, and Golden Thread requirements is creating inefficiency, cost and risk. Industry-wide templates, standardised submission formats, and common data standards would accelerate approvals, support compliance, and strengthen due-diligence processes.
4. Projects using proven systems, high-quality documentation and trained teams be prioritised for faster review. Allowing regulatory capacity to be focused on complex or higher-risk schemes, while rewarding organisations that deliver consistent, compliant proposals.
5. A firm commitment to reduce process delays and increase certainty and predictability in all stages of the development process with the key objective of returning to a 1-2 year timescale from a project's inception to commencement.



In closing, Dame Judith Hackitt reminded the group that the BSA is a cornerstone of a safer, more professional and more investable built environment — not an administrative hurdle. Safe buildings will command higher value, greater investor confidence and stronger long-term performance. Buildings without evidence of safety, competence and care will progressively lose liquidity, insurability and relevance. The roundtable reflected a shared commitment to that future — one where standardisation, clarity, education and innovation deliver a safer, more trusted and more investable living sector for the UK.

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Association for Rental Living

11 November 2025

