

The Planning & Infrastructure Bill: What It Means for the Build-to-Rent (BTR) Sector

Purpose:

To explain how the Planning & Infrastructure Bill will affect housing delivery, development speed, and the BTR sector in all its forms (institutional BTR, SFR/suburban BTR, major regeneration BTR, and co-living).

1. Why the Bill Matters

The Bill introduces the most significant overhaul of the planning system in a decade.

Its core aim: speed up development and infrastructure delivery.

For BTR—capital-intensive, professionally managed, and dependent on planning certainty—the reforms have major implications.

2. Key Changes That Accelerate Development

National Scheme of Delegation

More decisions made by officers instead of committees.

Benefit: Faster, less political decision-making for BTR schemes.

Impact: Stronger pipeline certainty for investors and funders.

Spatial Development Strategies (SDS)

Joint planning across multiple authorities.

Benefit: Supports delivery of large BTR-led regeneration, SFR neighbourhoods, and urban extensions.

Impact: Clearer direction on where long-term rental housing is expected.

Reformed Infrastructure & Judicial Review System

Streamlined NSIP processes + fewer routes for legal challenge.

Benefit: More predictable timelines for large BTR projects that depend on early infrastructure delivery.

Impact: Lower programme risk.

Faster Discharge of Planning Conditions

Nationally standardised conditions and quicker discharge.

Benefit: Allows BTR developers to start on site earlier.

Impact: Reduced holding costs and faster delivery.

3. Environmental and Regulatory Changes

Nature Restoration Levy

Option to pay into a levy instead of some on-site measures.

Opportunity: More predictable environmental costs for constrained urban or brownfield sites.

Risk: Must be proportionate to avoid harming viability.

Environmental Outcomes Reporting (EOR)

Replaces EIA/SEA with outcome-focused reporting.

Opportunity: More streamlined and digitalised assessment for BTR.

Risk: Short-term uncertainty as new system beds in.

4. What This Means for the BTR Sector

- Greater planning certainty for institutional investors.
- Faster delivery for mid- to large-scale BTR schemes.
- Improved viability for brownfield regeneration and suburban BTR.
- Reduced exposure to committee politics and repeat legal challenges.
- Better alignment of regional plans with long-term rental products.
- Biggest driver: Reduced political volatility and faster technical decision-making.

5. ARL Actions

- Support the Bill's objective of speeding up housing delivery.

- Push for clear national guidance on how BTR fits into SDS and delegated decision-making.
- Engage Government/Natural England on levy design and EOR transition.
- Work with local authorities to help officers understand BTR typologies and management models.
- Provide members with tools for engaging in the new planning system.

6. Conclusion

The Bill presents significant opportunities for the BTR sector—faster planning, reduced uncertainty, and a more investable environment.

ARL will support the direction of reform while advocating for clarity, implementation guidance, and proportionate environmental obligations.