House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee
Summary of ATLG Information

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1. Introduction

The House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee, chaired by Baroness Taylor of Bolton, has launched an inquiry into building safety regulation, with a particular focus on the work of the Building Safety Regulator, which was established following the Building Safety Act 2022. More information is available at the links below:

- Call for evidence
- Inquiry: Building Safety Regulator
- Industry and Regulators Committee

This document from the Architectural Technical Leads Group (ATLG, more information available here: www.atlg.uk) summarises the responses including evidence and commentary collated by the ATLG for the House of Lords Industry and Regulator Committee held on the 8th of July 2025, it includes some additional points that were submitted by members but did not come up during questioning.

Where an item was put forward by members, but was not discussed at the select committee, those points are highlighted with **blue text.**

2. Thanks and Contributors

Thanks to evidence contributors and editors:
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3. Summary of ATLG Information Presented to Committee

A. Organizational Role

- The ATLG was founded in 2023 and now includes 340 firms and ~10,000 designers.
- The ATLG group was founded as a communication platform for architects and technologists and now also actively collaborates with professional bodies and standards organisations.
- The ATLG is engaged in developing guidance with industry bodies, including RIBA, ASFP, BSI, the CLC and others.
- ALTG members are commonly BRPD dutyholders and often submit designs to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) on behalf of clients, respond to queries, and manage the HRB application process

B. Cultural Observations

- Some cultural improvement in the industry post-legislation.
- Clients are still insisting on progressing projects with unrealistic timescales (especially considering the onerous gateway processes) and paying scant attention to their requirements to resource projects properly (time and money)
- Overseas funders who are clients are often unaware of UK regulations.
- Understanding and guidance for clients is vital - clients are struggling to understand their duties and responsibilities.
- For example – many clients struggle to define and assess competence. How can competence be measured, and indeed how should it be quantified from a client perspective?
- Financial motives still dominate, but predictability can align safety with investment.
- Predictability helps funders assess risk and support safer projects.

C. Gateway System

- For a summary chart of the current Gateway System, please see Appendix 1.
- The Gateway system is misaligned with current procurement and design methods - leading to fragmented implementation. For an example of common information change processes on an existing building, see appendix 2.
- Would have liked to add – The economics of urban high-rise residential are very different from urban and rural low-rise, single family dwellings
    - Very different planning, procurement and delivery process
    - Significant risk for developers in cost and programme - all pushed to GW2 risk
    - Fee spreads pre- and post- Gw2 in simplified example:
    - Before - spread over three years
    - After - compressed into first 2 years - all at risk at GW2

- Gateway 1 applies only to certain high-risk buildings; excludes hospitals and care homes. These types of buildings therefore have no mechanism for early engagement with the regulator.
- Gateway 2 unclear what level of detail is needed by the BSR – applicants often provide too much information because there is a lack of detailed per-package technical positions guidance from the BSR.
- Approval delays range from 18 to 56 weeks at gateway 2, applicants often forced to accept extensions or face rejection.
- Major changes approvals can take 6+ weeks - the change control process is rigid; even small changes can be reclassified as major, depending on the interpretation of the BSR.
- Gateway 3 approval takes 8+ weeks, this delays occupancy while compliance is reviewed.
- The unpredictability of approval timelines is a major barrier to developing, funding and delivering projects.
- Early engagement and clear guidance are essential to avoid costly rejections - see recommendations section for more.

D. Regulatory Process and Systems

- ATLG members support the BSR and Hackitt Report recommendations.
- Advocated for a single regulator to address inconsistency in standards.
- Would have liked to add – ATLG survey - around 60% drop in HRB projects
- Would have liked to add – BSR delays are seen as more significant than other barriers like planning, skills shortages, or supply chain issues.
- Would have liked to add – Administrative and Resource Constraints: Many of the delays are attributed not to the framework itself, but to the BSR's internal resource limitations—particularly in assembling multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and managing submissions. This has led to long waiting periods, sometimes months, before applications are even reviewed.
- Identical applications receive inconsistent responses from different MDTs - a process to develop policy positions within the BSR and 'moderate' applications is needed.
- Would have liked to add – the BSR portal and electronic document management system (EDMS) does not appear to be fit for purpose and is lacking essential management features that have been available in commercial systems for twenty years. The potential for version conflicts and mistakes is a potential safety issue and runs counter to the requirement for a 'single source of truth' / golden thread in the HRB regulations
- Would have liked to add – While the outcomes-based model is valuable in principle, the lack of prescriptive guidance relating to detail required by the BSR in applications - e.g. sprinkler layouts —especially in areas where safety-critical decisions must be made—can lead to confusion and delays. This is particularly problematic for clients and building owners who may not have the technical expertise to interpret broad regulatory objectives.
- Working on existing buildings, for example façade remediation is a challenge - members try to pre-emptively submit speculative conditions but face uncertainty. Designs may need to be amended

many times as a project develops to take into account site discoveries and the resulting redesign and coordination.

    - For a summary chart of an *Information Change Record for Works to an Existing Large Complex Building*, showing information changing during a project progressing on site please see Appendix 2.

- Would have liked to add – Delays and Redesigns: The framework has led to substantial delays in new-build, refurbishment/reconfiguration and remediation projects. In some cases, projects have been redesigned multiple times to avoid classification as Higher-Risk Buildings (HRBs) due to the perceived burden of the HRB process. These redesigns are often driven by the desire to avoid prolonged approval timelines and the uncertainty of evolving guidance.

E. Industry Challenges

- BSR is grappling with industry-wide issues – some not of its own making.
- **BSR has become the de facto interpreter** of complex and sometimes contradictory design guidance, exposing gaps in the system - inconsistency in standards and guidance is a major issue.
- BSR lacks technical expertise to interpret standards like, for example BS-9991. The BSR needs to have a clear policy position on conflicts and gaps in standards and make those policies clear to those working on HRBs.
- There is a need for more construction competence within BSR – particularly for the regulatory leads on projects.
- Would have liked to add – Mismatch in Expertise: There are concerns that MDTs sometimes lack the depth of expertise found in applicant design teams. For example, designs led by architects may be reviewed by MDTs without architectural representation, raising questions about the rigour and fairness of assessments.
- Would have liked to add – There is a widespread perception that the BSR is struggling to secure staff with the right level of competence and experience. This includes a lack of Registered Building Inspectors (RBIs) and Fire Engineers trained to the standards recommended in the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report.
- Approved documents contain contradictions with legislation, conflict with each other and must be reviewed, for example, BR 7(2) and 7(3) vs. ADB vol. 1:
    - Clause 10.19 from AD B Vol 1: 'Solar shading devices installed up to 4.5m above ground level ***are not required to meet the requirements of regulation 7(2)***'.
    - The regulation which lists permitted exemptions, 7(3), states that regulation 7(2) does not apply to 'components associated with a solar shading device, ***excluding*** components whose primary function is to provide shade or deflect sunlight, such as the awning curtain or slats' Reg 7(3)(ha).
    - This language in regulation 7(3) does, in effect, say that solar shading devices (the parts that deflect sunlight anyway) ***must*** meet the requirements of Reg 7(2) in all circumstances, as there is no caveat here about combustible solar shading being acceptable under 4.5m above ground level.

    - Previous ATLG open letter with further examples of conflicts in the Approved docs.
- Guidance across government websites is fragmented and contradictory – a clear coordinated review and consolidation of guidance is needed.
    - See also: discussion in FTT tribunal decision - LON/00BG/HYI/2023/0024 -Residential Property Tribunal Decision of Judge Martyński and Mr A Thomas RBI, FRICS, MIFireE on 3 July 2024

F. Would have liked to add – Impact on Government Housing Targets

- **Housing Delivery at Risk**: Anecdotal evidence suggests that as many as 23,000 housing units have been delayed due to the HRB system. If the current "maximum detail" approach continues, it could add 6–9 months to the design phase of projects.
- **Remediation Delays**: The framework has also slowed the remediation of existing high-rise buildings, including cladding replacement projects. Even when new cladding is lighter and safer, the BSR still requires extensive and inconsistent justification, adding to delays.

Regulatory Uncertainty: Because HRB applications do not lock in applicable guidance at planning gateway one (PGO), projects are vulnerable to changes in standards during the approval process. This has led to repeated redesigns, especially for legacy projects, further delaying delivery and increasing costs.

G. Disproportionate Impact on Minor or Rectification Works

- Small-scale projects face the same lengthy processes as major schemes, despite minimal safety implications.
- Overly Broad Triggers: Many applications for minor internal alterations still fall under Category A or B work, triggering full regulatory scrutiny. This includes works that have minimal or no impact on structural or fire safety, such as internal layout changes within dwellings.
- Would have liked to add – Uncertainty and Risk Aversion: The lack of clarity around what documentation is required, and the fear of disproportionate scrutiny, has discouraged some stakeholders from pursuing safety improvements. For example, uncertainty around how to handle a gas riser in an existing HRB led to reluctance to proceed with ventilation upgrades.
- Category A/B classifications and licensed schemes (e.g. FENSA) exist but are underutilized or not well understood.

H. Recommendations

- Any amended HRB system should be streamlined, consistent, transparent, and predictable.

- Would have liked to add – Need for Increased and Stable Funding: both increased funding and more predictable, long-term financial planning are necessary to improve the BSR's internal systems and staffing. A fee structure rather than hourly rate per person in regards to anticipated cost for BSR to apply across the differing project/building types.
- Would have liked to add – review Cat A/B definitions from HRB Procedures regulations (reg 12) so that more minor works/remediation works come under Cat B and can be dealt with by RBIs in other relevant authorities (i.e. local authority or RBCA), rather than BSR (e.g. internal layout alterations to flats in an HRB)
- It is not clear what the organisation by organisation process suggested by the BSR would involve. It may work for well defined large frameworks, but it is not clear how it would apply to the multiplicity of project and procurement arrangements in use across all HRBs.
    - There is concern that such a shift could weaken scrutiny of individual buildings, especially where different teams or consultants are involved across projects.
    - It may also favour large organisations and disadvantage smaller players, potentially leading to regulatory capture or a "too big to fail" dynamic.
    - Some fear it could lead to a "copy and paste" mentality, undermining the bespoke assessment needed for complex or unique buildings.
- **Support for Tailoring by Sector:** There is support for sector-specific adaptations, such as for hospitals, where consistent design frameworks are common. This could allow for more efficient reviews without compromising safety. From the current list of HRB categories in legislation this would mean separating out:
- The BSR and industry must develop regulator-endorsed guidance on gateway submissions, publish and meet timescales for each part of the process as early as practicable.
- Split Gateway 2 into 2A (principles and locking in guidance versions) and 2B (technical detail).
    - 2A – initial BSR submission:
        - Lock-in guidance used, similar to an initial notice
        - Sets out principles of scheme at a RIBA 3 / early RIBA 4 stage
        - Part 2B must be submitted within agreed timeframe, works must begin on site within agreed timeframe.
    - 2B – the full gateway 2 pack
        - Includes all information from current Gw2
        - Sets out AWR process
    - The problem this staged 2A/2B approach aims to solve is best summarised when considering fire requirements and delivering a compliant scheme. If your fire strategy team's approach hasn't been agreed upon in principle, it is inefficient to require detailed structural calculations for elements such as balcony balustrades at the same stage. The rapid evolution of fire standards (both Approved Document B and British Standards), coupled with Gateway process delays, has forced many projects to completely revise their strategies midway—creating significant uncertainty, delays and costs.
    - We believe this staged approach within the Gateway 2 process offers numerous benefits for all parties concerned—developers, designers, contractors and the regulator:

    - The BSR would receive key information earlier with a GW 2A approach, allowing focused review of essential principles documentation only. This initial phase might require only a 6 to 8-week process, conducted well in advance of any pressure to start on site.
    - It would enable the BSR to plan resources more effectively. Less resource would be needed at 2A due to its principles-only focus, eliminating the need to review extensive specialist subcontractor construction information whilst still determining whether, for example, the fire strategy is compliant. The scheme would then be in the 'system', so when the follow-on 2B application is submitted, the BSR would be well aware of the scheme and focused purely on reviewing the 'detail' against the agreed principles.
    - Better alignment with RIBA stages and preferred procurement routes for large-scale Higher-Risk Buildings would provide reassurance through Gateway 2A while creating value through Design and Build agreements with contractors through Stage 4 and beyond, prior to Gateway 2B approval.
    - Locking in schemes to standards and regulations at an early stage would provide reassurance to developers and contractors—and prevent scenarios where rejection on grounds of principles renders all the detailed information abortive.
- Would have liked to add – A **robust Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)** is needed to:
    - Track documents
    - Enable workflows
    - Ensure all MDT members receive relevant updates
    - Maintain a "single source of truth" for the Golden Thread
- Would have liked to add – We suggest that the BSR consider tendering to providers and using a customised version of an off-the-shelf EDMS.
- Would have liked to add – Pilot Programs - Any major changes should be piloted before full rollout to test effectiveness and reduce disruption.
- Would have liked to add or provide further detail - Hospital HRBs and the NHS. The gradual removal of NHS England and transfer of healthcare strategy into government departmental control (under DHSC) means there appears to be the potential to align government healthcare strategy relating to new buildings more effectively with government building safety strategy as the BSR comes under MCHLG. Aligning the requirements for healthcare provision and building safety with a better hospital-specific series of processes, perhaps with new appropriate legislation, which avoids the misalignment of fitting a predominantly residentially focused HRB building safety regime onto hospitals.
- Allow phased compliance: Define what must be submitted upfront vs. what can follow later, to reflect real-world project workflows. Publish and actively manage guidance for this process.
- Recommends a centralised, authoritative source of government guidance, bringing together BSR, HSE, MHCLG guidance.
- Ensure clients are measured to be able to demonstrate the correct Skills, Knowledge, Experience and Behaviour. This could also be said as a requirement for the BSR authority reviewing the submissions themselves. (Someone who understands hospitals, for example, should be 'allocated' that type of submission).

- Would have liked to add – the UK Government needs to review the relationship between the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022, the recommendations in the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report, the government white paper ***UK infrastructure: a 10 year strategy*** **and the changes to level 7 apprenticeships in architecture**.
- *UK infrastructure: a 10 year strategy*[1] was published on 19 June 2025 and outlines the UK Government's long-term strategy to drive growth in housing and social infrastructure. As well as outlining the UK Government's strategy for capital investment, it also includes a number of commitments "to investing in skills and training". The section on "building a skilled workforce to deliver infrastructure" outlines how funding will be made available to "deliver up to 60,000 additional skilled construction workers this Parliament". We would suggest that this aim to increase capacity in the infrastructure paper, and the wider driver within the *Building Safety Act 2022* and related legislation to improve competence within the industry, is assessed against the government's decision to remove public funding available to architects for the level 7 apprenticeship from January 2026[2]. Given the need for increased capacity and competence in the construction industry, the removal of funding for routes into the industry such as the level 7 apprenticeship seems counter intuitive, and we would ask the Government to reconsider this decision and consider increasing rather than decreasing access to the highest levels of training and qualifications for all construction professionals, including architects. We would further recommend that increasing the numbers of professionals entering training to become Registered Building Inspectors, and into fire engineering, is critical to the future competence of the industry. The Government has a role to review how best to achieve this by assessing access to courses, training and qualifications for key parts of the construction industry, as this is unlikely to happen without a clearly defined strategy.

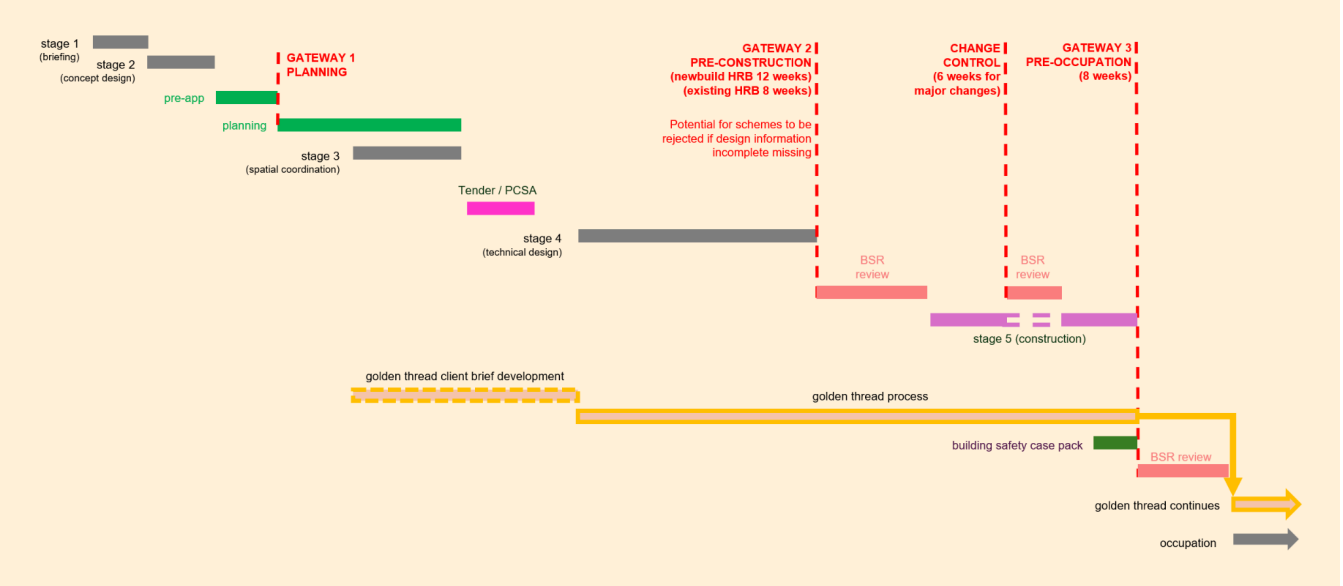
    [1] UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy - GOV.UK

    [2] Architecture apprenticeships under threat as Level 7 funding withdrawn for over-21s | News | Building Design

4. Appendices

Appendix 1

Gantt Chart Indicating Project Process for a Newbuild. HRB under current (mid-2025) HRB legislation



Appendix 2

Information Change Record for Design of a Large Complex Retrofit Building (Pre-HRB-Regulations)