

ASSOCIATED  
ARCHITECTS

# *In* Practice...

unpacking the Building Safety Act

## 5 What makes an HRB?

Birmingham | Leeds | Oxford

May 2025 - Rev. 1

Associated Architects  
1 Severn Street Place, Birmingham B1 1SE

# What is a Higher-Risk Building (HRB)?

Defined by the Act as a building in England that is either at least 18 meters high or has at least 7 storeys, and contains at least two residential units.

1

Under the Building Safety Act, a Higher-Risk Building is defined by height, use, and occupancy

2

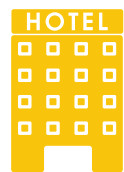
The classification has serious implications for approvals, compliance, and ongoing management.

3

For **new** buildings, the criteria apply at design stage. For **existing** buildings, the rules trigger different duties once occupied.

## Where it can be confusing...

*Some buildings qualify but are **excluded from the occupation part** of the higher-risk regime.*



Hotels



Hospitals



Boarding Schools



Military Barracks

This means that **mixed-use buildings** are covered by the higher-risk regime.

For example, if a building contains a shopping centre but also has two residential units, then it is a HRB, provided it meets the height or storeys threshold.



## HRBs – New Buildings

A new building is classed as higher-risk if it is:

- At least 18 metres tall or has 7 or more storeys
- Contains at least 2 residential units or is a care home or hospital
- This triggers Gateway 2 and 3 approvals and oversight by the Building Safety Regulator.



## HRBs – Existing Buildings

For an existing occupied building, it is considered higher-risk if:

- It is 18m+ tall or has 7+ storeys
- It contains 2 or more residential units
- It is already occupied (including flats, care homes, sheltered housing)
- If it meets this threshold, it must be registered with the BSR and have a named Accountable Person unless excluded from the occupation part of the higher-risk regime.

The main difference between a new and existing HRB lies in how the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) oversees the building's lifecycle. For new HRBs, the BSR is the building control body from the outset. For existing HRBs, the BSR takes over as the building control body for "HRB work" (building safety work). This includes work that creates a new HRB or work that causes an existing building to become an HRB.

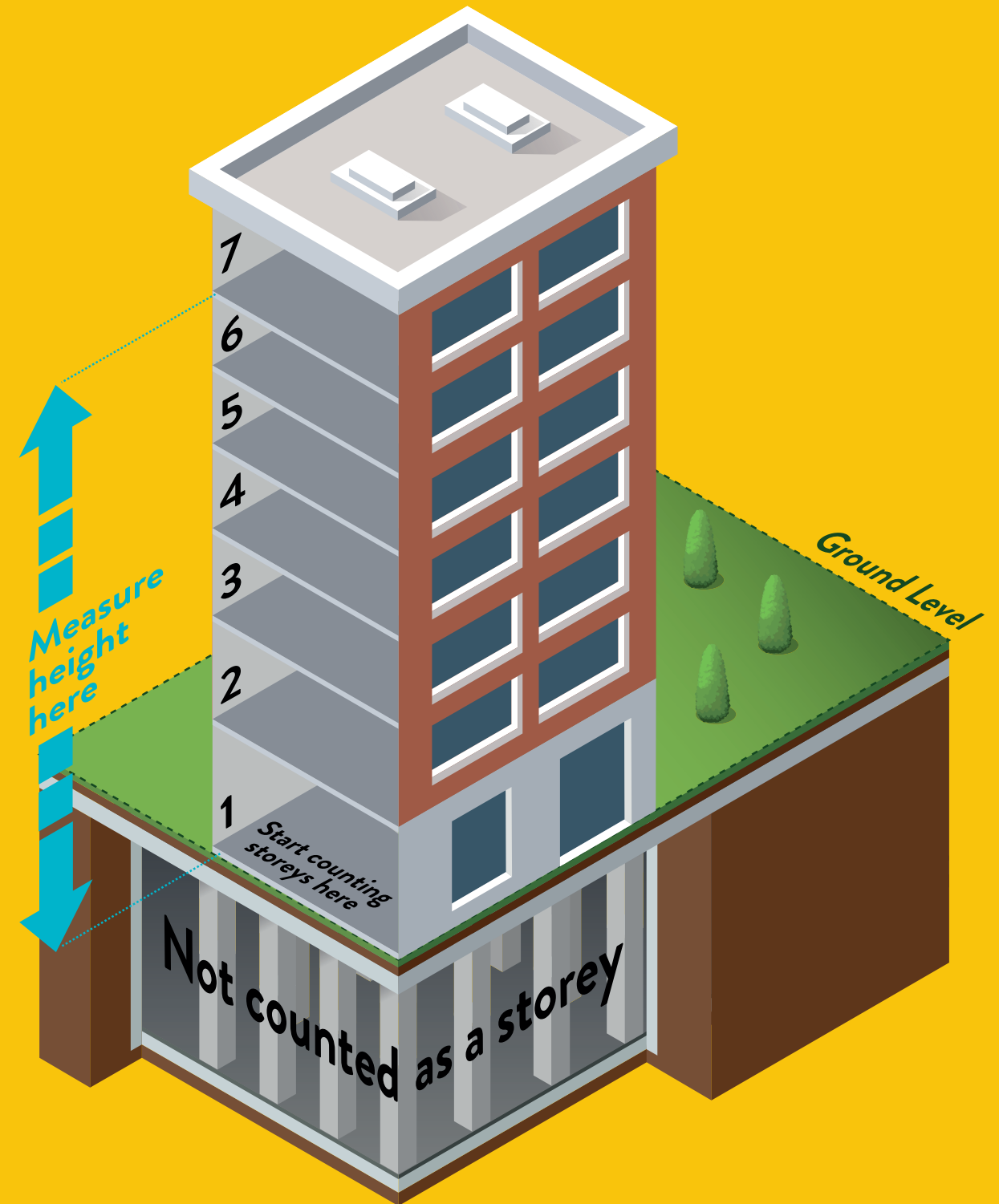


Let's explore some examples of scenarios that illustrate what makes different HRBs, covering both new builds and existing structures in terms of height and arrangement.

These are just a few of many examples we've mapped out.

Check out the last slide to find out how you can download all our helpful scenarios in poster format.

## Scenario 1



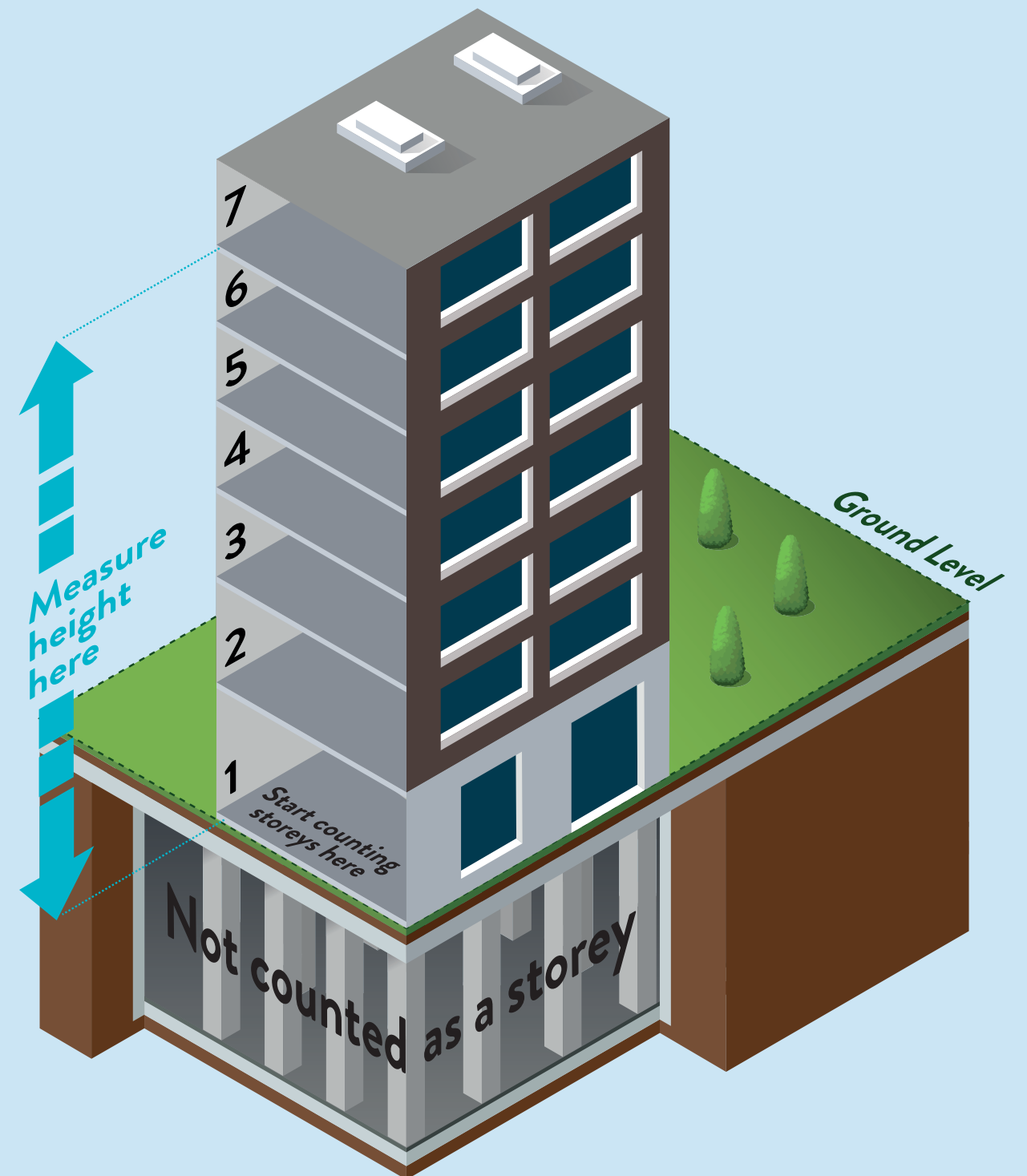
A Higher-Risk Building - an HRB - as defined by the Building Safety Act 2022, is a building in England that is either at least 18 meters high or has at least 7 storeys, and contains at least two residential units or is a care home or hospital.

## Scenario 2



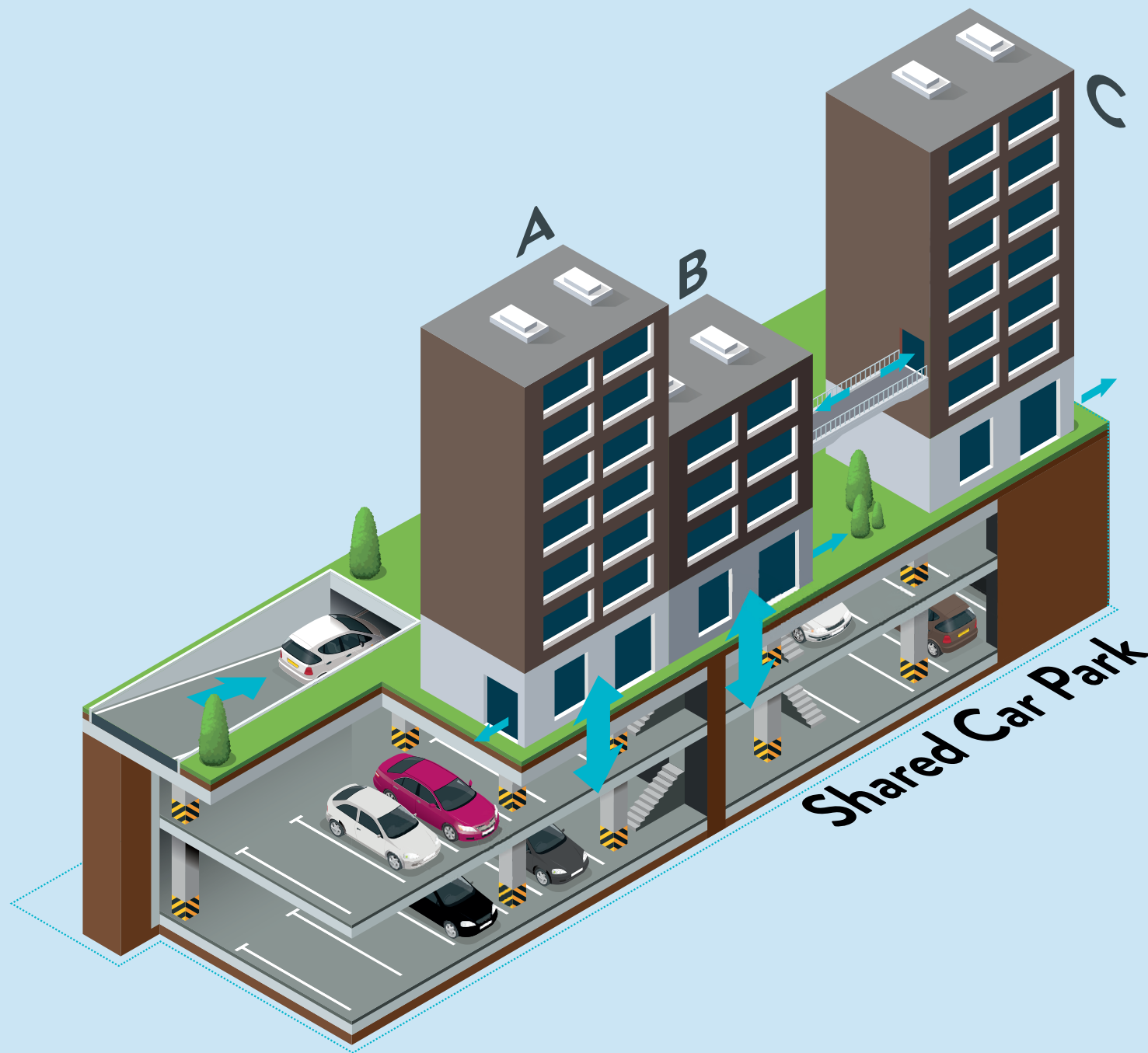
This proposed new building has two residential towers (A and B) attached at foundation level. These towers are considered one building due to shared foundations.

## Scenario 3



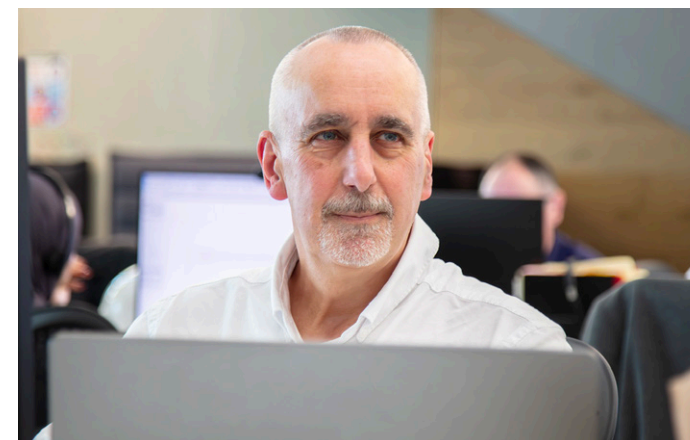
For existing buildings as with new, storeys are counted from the first above-ground level, and height is measured to the top storey's floor surface. This existing structure has 7 storeys and is considered an HRB.

# Scenario 4

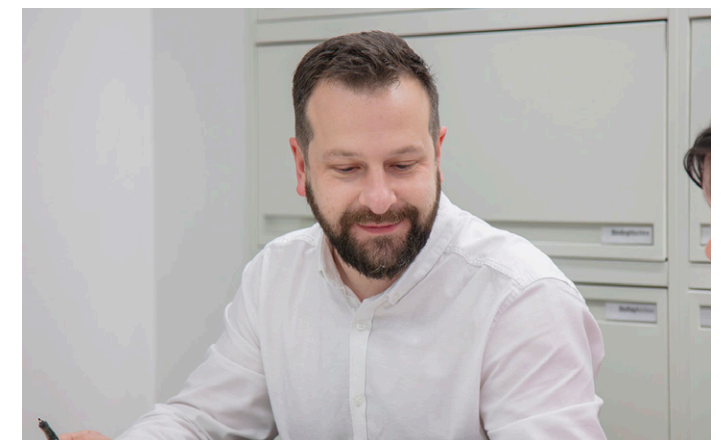


This diagram shows three towers (A, B, and C) connected via a shared basement car park and walkway. Towers A and C are independent sections and buildings under the higher-risk regime. Tower B, though independent, is not higher-risk as it doesn't meet the storey threshold.

## Meet the Architects... Our RIBA BRPD Registered Duty Holders



**Ian Butler**  
Senior Architect, QA Manager and  
Principal Designer



**Alex Paul**  
Director - Birmingham Office,  
Principal Designer

ASSOCIATED  
ARCHITECTS

*In* Practice...  
unpacking the Building Safety Act