
COMPLIMENTARY INVESTOR BRIEFING

Alternative Property Investment Guide

For investors who value long-term relationships, careful filtering and the confidence that weak opportunities are not put in front of them just to create activity.

Capital at risk. Private market investments can be illiquid and unsuitable for many investors. WoollamConsult acts as an introducer and does not provide personal financial advice.

Founder note: trust starts before the opportunity pack

WoollamConsult is built around long-term investor relationships. The objective is not to show every available deal or create urgency around opportunities that are unlikely to stand up to proper review. The aim is to present opportunities only where James feels they are viable enough to deserve an investor's time and attention.

That means education comes first, filtering happens before visibility, and the best outcome is an investor who comes back after one opportunity and asks, "what's next?" because the relationship has earned that trust.

Prepared by James Woollam, founder of WoollamConsult. Current opportunities are shared only after the appropriate investor declaration route is reviewed, and only where WoollamConsult believes the opportunity is worth serious consideration.

The WoollamConsult approach

Private market investing depends on judgement. WoollamConsult's role is to help reduce noise by looking for opportunities that appear credible, understandable and capable of being assessed properly before they are introduced.

Long-term first. Viability before visibility. The standard is simple: investors should feel comfortable returning and asking what is worth looking at next.

1. What does alternative property investment mean?

Alternative property investment usually refers to opportunities outside everyday listed shares, mainstream funds, bank savings and standard buy-to-let ownership. In a property context, it may include private development finance, loan notes, joint venture structures, fixed-term lending arrangements, preference shares or other private market introductions.

The term alternative is broad. It can cover investments that are asset-backed, project-based, privately issued, less frequently traded, or available only to certain investor categories. The common theme is that investors usually need to do more work than they would with a mainstream listed fund: understand the issuer, the asset, the documents, the security, the risks, and the practical route to getting money back.

These opportunities can be useful for experienced investors who understand illiquidity and risk, but they are not suitable for everyone. A higher target return normally exists because the investor is taking more risk, accepting less liquidity, or relying on a narrower exit route.

2. Common structures you may see

Loan notes	A company borrows from investors for a stated term. Investors should understand who the issuer is, how repayment is expected and what security exists.
Private lending	Capital may support acquisition, development or refinance. Borrower quality, exit strategy and loan-to-value position matter.

Equity participation	Investors may share more directly in project outcomes. This can increase both upside and downside exposure.
Introduced opportunities	An introducer can connect suitable investors with providers. WoollamConsult aims to filter opportunities before they are shared, while investors should still assess the opportunity independently.

3. Reading the headline return

A target return is not the same as a bank interest rate, a guaranteed coupon or a promise that capital will be returned on time. It is usually a commercial target based on assumptions about the property, borrower, costs, timing and exit route. A sensible investor asks how the target return is generated and what must happen for the target to be paid.

- Is the return fixed, targeted, variable, rolled up, paid monthly, or paid only on exit?
- Is the return paid from operating income, refinance proceeds, sale proceeds, retained reserves, or future fundraising?
- What happens if the project is delayed or the borrower misses a payment?
- Does the investor rank ahead of ordinary shareholders, behind a senior lender, or somewhere else in the capital structure?

The higher the return, the harder the investor should look at the route to repayment. Strong opportunities explain the downside as clearly as the upside.

4. The risks to understand before looking at returns

Professional investors usually start with downside risk, not the headline return. Key risks can include project delay, planning risk, cost overruns, borrower failure, refinancing risk, sale risk, valuation uncertainty and limited ability to exit early.

Asset-backed does not mean guaranteed. Security may improve the recovery position, but it does not remove market risk, execution risk or the possibility of capital loss.

5. What asset-backed security can and cannot do

Property security can take different forms, such as a legal charge, debenture, guarantee or security trustee arrangement. Its value depends on ranking, property value, prior debt, enforcement costs, market conditions and the documents actually in place.

A sensible review asks: who holds the security, what ranks ahead of investors, what valuation supports the position, what covenants apply, and what process would be followed if repayment is late?

- First legal charge: usually stronger than unsecured lending, but still dependent on value, ranking and enforcement.
- Second charge or subordinated position: may offer security, but recovery depends on the senior lender being repaid first.

- Debenture or company-level security: can be useful, but the investor needs to understand what assets are actually available.
- Personal or corporate guarantee: only as strong as the guarantor's financial position and enforceability.
- Security trustee: investors should understand who acts, what powers they have and when they can enforce.

6. Due diligence areas that matter

Issuer and borrower	Who receives the money, who controls the company, what experience they have, and whether past projects were delivered as expected.
Use of funds	Whether capital is used for land, construction, refinance, interest reserve, fees, working capital or distributions.
Valuation and loan-to-value	Whether valuation evidence is recent, independent, realistic and based on assumptions that can be stress-tested.
Planning and construction	Whether planning, contractor, cost, delay and contingency risks are clearly explained.
Exit route	Whether repayment depends on sale, refinance, income, a future raise, or another uncertain event.
Legal documents	Whether the loan note instrument, security documents, risk warnings and investor rights match the headline summary.

7. Documents you should expect to review

An investor should not rely only on a short summary, advert or headline return. Before making a commitment, the investor pack should make the structure, risk and rights clear enough for proper review, and the documents should be consistent with the commercial claims being made.

- Investment memorandum or information pack explaining the opportunity, issuer, use of funds, risks and repayment route.
- Loan note instrument, subscription agreement or other document that creates the investor's legal rights.
- Security documents, valuation evidence and details of who holds security on behalf of investors.
- Company information, borrower background, project information and track record evidence where relevant.
- Clear risk warnings, fees, commissions, conflicts of interest and any introducer payments.
- A realistic downside or delay explanation, not only a base case and target return.

If the documents do not support the headline message, the headline message should not drive the decision.

8. Red flags that deserve extra caution

- Pressure to act quickly before you have read the documents.
- A headline return is clear, but the downside scenario is vague.
- The exit relies on optimistic sale values, refinancing or market conditions with little margin for error.
- Security is described as asset-backed but the ranking, trustee, valuation or enforcement process is unclear.
- The issuer cannot explain how investor capital is protected if the project is delayed.
- Marketing suggests low risk while the documents describe material risk of loss.
- The opportunity is presented as suitable for everyone.

WoollamConsult's relationship-led position is simple: if an opportunity does not feel robust enough to warrant serious investor review, it should not be promoted just to create activity.

9. Portfolio fit and concentration

Alternative property investments should usually be considered as part of a wider portfolio, not in isolation. The FCA's InvestSmart material warns investors to think carefully about diversification and the risk of committing too much of their wealth to high-risk investments. Even a credible opportunity can be inappropriate if it creates too much concentration, too much illiquidity, or too much reliance on one borrower, project or exit route.

For many investors, the question is not simply 'is this attractive?' but 'how much of my overall capital could I afford to have tied up, delayed, or at risk if the plan does not run as expected?'

10. Ten checks before you request an opportunity pack

- 1 **Understand the issuer.** Who receives the money and what is their track record?
- 2 **Check the use of funds.** Is the capital for land, works, refinance, fees or working capital?
- 3 **Interrogate the exit.** Is repayment expected from sale, refinance, income or another raise?
- 4 **Review the security.** What is secured, who holds it, and where does it rank?
- 5 **Stress-test delays.** What happens if the project runs six or twelve months late?
- 6 **Read the risk wording.** Good opportunities still explain what can go wrong.
- 7 **Take advice where needed.** Tax, legal and financial advice can be important before committing capital.
- 8 **Confirm the investor route.** Is the opportunity restricted to high net worth, sophisticated or other eligible investors?
- 9 **Ask what would stop the deal.** A credible introducer should be willing to say when an opportunity is not strong enough.
- 10 **Check portfolio fit.** Would the investment create too much concentration, illiquidity or reliance on one outcome?

11. Why investor declarations come before current opportunities

Some private market opportunities are restricted and should not be promoted widely to ordinary retail investors. WoollamConsult keeps public material educational, then asks investors to complete the appropriate declaration route before current opportunities or private packs are shared.

This process is not there to pressure anyone into a category. It is there to make sure restricted information is handled carefully and that the investor understands the nature of the market before asking for more detail.

The FCA Handbook includes detailed rules around communicating financial promotions and relying on exemptions for certified high net worth, certified sophisticated and self-certified sophisticated investors. This is one reason WoollamConsult keeps public material educational and uses the access route before private packs are shared.

12. Questions to ask before investing

- 1 What exactly am I investing in, and who owes me money or obligations?
- 2 What documents create my rights, and have I read them rather than only the summary?
- 3 Where do I rank if the borrower or issuer fails?
- 4 What is the independent evidence for the asset value?
- 5 What must happen for repayment to be made on time?
- 6 What happens if the project is delayed, refinanced late or sold below expectation?
- 7 Can I exit early, or should I assume I am locked in until maturity or completion?
- 8 What fees, commissions or introducer payments are being made?
- 9 What regulatory protection, if any, applies if something goes wrong?
- 10 Is this proportionate within my wider portfolio and risk tolerance?

References and further reading

- FCA InvestSmart: Understanding high-risk investments - <https://www.fca.org.uk/investsmart/understanding-high-risk-investments>
- FCA InvestSmart: Risk and returns - <https://www.fca.org.uk/investsmart/risk-returns>
- FCA InvestSmart: Diversification - <https://www.fca.org.uk/investsmart/diversification>
- FCA consumer information on mini-bonds - <https://www.fca.org.uk/consumers/mini-bonds>
- FCA Handbook COBS 4: communicating with clients, including financial promotions - <https://handbook.fca.org.uk/handbook/COBS/4>
- FCA Policy Statement PS22/10: strengthening financial promotion rules for high-risk investments - <https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/policy/ps22-10.pdf>

Next step

If you have read the guide and want to request details on current private market property opportunities, visit woollamconsult.co.uk/investor-access. WoollamConsult will review the route before any private information is shared, then focus on whether the opportunity is worth a serious conversation.

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