# Shareholders push back as Assura takeover battle signals private equity resistance



Private equity’s aggressive push into Britain’s listed companies has long drawn criticism, but recent developments suggest a subtle shift towards greater shareholder resistance. Notably, NHS and healthcare property investor Assura’s decision to side with rival Primary Health Properties (PHP) over a private equity buyout led by KKR has been hailed as a rare win for shareholder influence, even if the final outcome remains in flux.

Assura had initially agreed to a £1.6 billion cash takeover led by private equity firms KKR and Stonepeak Partners, an offer representing a 32% premium over its share price before the bidding war began. KKR’s consortium argued that private ownership would allow Assura to pursue capital investment opportunities without the constraints of public market pressures. However, this deal faced competition from PHP, which proposed a mixed cash-and-shares offer valued at around £1.5 billion initially, later increasing to a £1.7 billion bid. PHP’s offer, which combines cash with shares, was designed to keep Assura within the public market fold, presenting shareholders the choice to stay invested and benefit from future sector growth. This rivalry has paused Assura’s acceptance of the KKR deal as the company evaluates the higher, primarily share-based offer from PHP, underscoring the complex calculus investors face between guaranteed cash and potential long-term gains.

Similar shareholder resistance has been seen in the logistics real estate sector, as exemplified by Tritax EuroBox’s recent decision to merge with Brookfield Asset Management, spurning a competing offer from Segro. Tritax chose the higher certainty of Brookfield’s $1.44 billion all-cash offer, reflecting investor preference amid a market where logistics properties—driven by the expanding e-commerce sector—are increasingly valuable.

This mounting pushback on private equity takeovers contrasts with a long history of UK boards capitulating to such bids, often under pressure from advice suggesting rejecting offers might breach fiduciary duties. Critics argue that many of these deals have undervalued companies and harmed UK industries, especially in strategic sectors like defence, where cuts in government spending after the Cold War left mid-sized suppliers vulnerable to foreign buyouts. This has led to a migration of ownership overseas and damage to the UK’s industrial base, including loss of innovation and proprietary technology.

Share price performances further illustrate what might have been. Defence contractor Babcock’s shares have surged this year, prices rising by more than 129% following strong revenue and profit growth, offering a stark contrast to firms sold at depressed valuations to private equity. Meanwhile, few examples of private equity-backed British companies returning successfully to public markets endure, with some, like payments processor Worldpay, relocating to the US.

The unfolding scenario at Assura is reflective of a broader reassessment among investors and UK boards about the merits of private equity ownership. While private equity offers immediate premiums, the long-term strategic implications for shareholders and national economic assets are prompting calls for a more cautious approach. The current battle between cash certainty and growth potential signifies a nuanced evolution in UK capital markets, where shareholder voices may increasingly shape the fate of key companies.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/comment/article-14847755/Gates-close-private-equity-shareholders-boards-standing-predators-ALEX-BRUMMER.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-to-exit-market-as-it-rejects-php-for-us-private-equity-deal), [[7]](https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-pauses-kkr-takeover-as-php-returns-with-fresh-bid)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/399398d4-6c4f-4693-9f7e-030082243ee5), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/kkr-tables-best-final-23-billion-offer-buy-uks-assura-2025-06-11/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/7a65972a-2bfe-491b-945f-ce36107d4e21), [[6]](https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-to-exit-market-as-it-rejects-php-for-us-private-equity-deal), [[7]](https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-pauses-kkr-takeover-as-php-returns-with-fresh-bid)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/tritax-eurobox-agrees-144-bln-deal-with-brookfield-snubs-segro-2024-10-10/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/comment/article-14847755/Gates-close-private-equity-shareholders-boards-standing-predators-ALEX-BRUMMER.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/comment/article-14847755/Gates-close-private-equity-shareholders-boards-standing-predators-ALEX-BRUMMER.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/comment/article-14847755/Gates-close-private-equity-shareholders-boards-standing-predators-ALEX-BRUMMER.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-to-exit-market-as-it-rejects-php-for-us-private-equity-deal), [[7]](https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-pauses-kkr-takeover-as-php-returns-with-fresh-bid)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/comment/article-14847755/Gates-close-private-equity-shareholders-boards-standing-predators-ALEX-BRUMMER.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/399398d4-6c4f-4693-9f7e-030082243ee5> - Assura, a UK-based healthcare property investor, has agreed to a £1.6 billion all-cash takeover by a private capital consortium led by KKR and Stonepeak Partners, rejecting a rival £1.5 billion cash-and-shares offer from Primary Health Properties (PHP). Assura stated that private ownership would enable greater capital investment without the need for asset sales. The agreed offer represents a 32% premium over Assura’s share price before bidding began in February. The deal requires shareholder approval and is expected to close by autumn 2025.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/kkr-tables-best-final-23-billion-offer-buy-uks-assura-2025-06-11/> - Private equity firms KKR and Stonepeak Partners have increased their takeover bid for UK healthcare real estate investor Assura to nearly £1.7 billion, asserting it as their 'best and final' offer. The revised bid of 52.1 pence per share, including dividends, surpasses the 51.7 pence per share proposed by rival Primary Health Properties (PHP) in May. This latest offer represents a 39% premium over Assura's share price on February 13, the day before the initial approach, and values Assura at £1.6 billion as of the latest close.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/7a65972a-2bfe-491b-945f-ce36107d4e21> - A takeover battle for Assura, a major owner of GP surgeries and healthcare centres in the UK, underscores renewed interest in the UK property market. Initially, Assura agreed to a £1.6 billion cash bid from private equity firms KKR and Stonepeak. However, it is now considering a rival £1.7 billion mostly share-based bid from competitor Primary Health Properties (PHP). The decision reflects a broader question for investors: accept the certainty of cash or bet on future sector growth. While KKR warns of the integration risks with PHP's proposal, PHP argues that the sector, weighed down by high interest rates, is now showing signs of recovery.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/tritax-eurobox-agrees-144-bln-deal-with-brookfield-snubs-segro-2024-10-10/> - Tritax EuroBox has agreed to a $1.44 billion acquisition deal with Brookfield Asset Management, which could ignite a takeover battle. This all-cash deal values Tritax EuroBox shares at 69 pence each, slightly higher than the 68.4 pence offer from Segro, a British warehouse owner. Tritax will withdraw its support for Segro's offer in favor of Brookfield's bid, citing higher certainty for shareholders. The deal reflects growing investor interest in logistics real estate, driven by e-commerce's expansion. Tritax EuroBox, which has struggled recently with share value decline, spans properties in seven European countries, catering to various sectors. Brookfield plans to integrate Tritax EuroBox's portfolio into its European logistics platform.
6. <https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-to-exit-market-as-it-rejects-php-for-us-private-equity-deal> - NHS landlord Assura is ending its time as a London-listed investment trust after rejecting a bid from peer Primary Health Properties in favour of a US consortium. The portfolio of 600 healthcare buildings, including GP surgeries, pharmacies and treatment facilities, will be sold to KKR and Stonepeak Partners, whose 49.4p per share bid, worth £1.6bn in total, pipped PHP to the post. PHP had made a second bid for Assura, with the Harry Hyman-founded trust arguing that its proposal would offer investors the chance to remain invested in a listed vehicle and benefit from future growth in healthcare real estate. But its offer of 46.2p – made up of PHP shares and cash – was still below the consortium’s bid.
7. <https://www.theaic.co.uk/aic/news/industry-news/assura-pauses-kkr-takeover-as-php-returns-with-fresh-bid> - Specialist primary care property investor Assura has placed KKR’s takeover bid on ice as it reviews a fresh £1.7bn offer from Primary Health Properties (PHP). Under PHP’s shares and cash offer, made on 16 May, Assura’s shareholders would receive 0.38 new PHP shares and 12.5p in cash, which represents a 4.7% premium to the 49.4p per share cash offer made by KKR and Stonepeak. Based on PHP’s closing share price on 15 May and two quarterly dividends (one paid in April and the other due in July), the offer values Assura at 51.7p per share which is a little under £1.7bn. This is PHP’s third offer for the NHS landlord.