



HOW TO FIND A BUILDING PLOT

ONLINE SOLUTION FOR PLOT-HUNTERS

The first port of call for anyone serious about finding a building plot or project should be PlotSearch. At any one time, there are over 5000 plots and building opportunities listed from a wide variety of sources, all with planning permission. This free service provides you with comprehensive information on each listing including location, planning type, size, services and the agent details to contact. Using PlotSearch you'll get a good idea of plot prices in your chosen area, and be able gauge whether you will have to widen your horizons by looking further afield, or by increasing the amount of money that you have allocated for your plot.

BE PROACTIVE

Finding the right plot or development opportunity can require much luck, as well as perseverance; many people end up looking for a long time without finding what they are looking for. Others can immediately pick up a plot almost at will, whereas others seem to just stumble onto a plot when they are least expecting it.

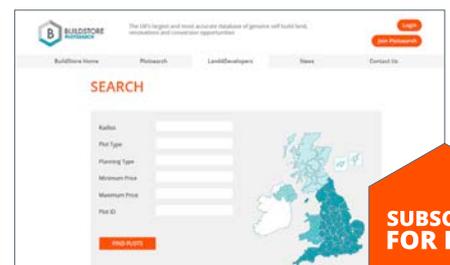
The key is to be proactive. When you are studying the lists of opportunities, it is important to learn all about the area you are looking in. For example, get to know all of the good streets, along with the ones where you would not want to live. Make yourselves aware of values in the area in which you will be building and, above all, get to know the people. Word of mouth can be so important in finding a plot.

GET TO KNOW THE AREA

Drive or walk around the area looking for potential plots, and don't be afraid to ask if you see a gap in the street or an obvious plot. Look out for areas where there has been obvious infilling in the past and where, perhaps, a house sits on a larger than average plot that has access to the highway. Also look out for streets where new homes have been built in the large rear gardens of houses, with access down the side of the original.

TIPS

- Subscribe to Plotsearch - it lists more than 5,000 building plots
- Be proactive and get to know the area in which you want to build
- Look for 'obvious' plots in streets and towns
- Have a legal and binding agreement with a plot-owner
- Contact the owner of a plot, as opposed to their agent





MAKE AN AGREEMENT WITH PLOT-OWNER

Remember that you do not have to actually own land in order to apply for planning permission on it. You do not even need the owner's permission, although you must give them the requisite notice of your intentions. However, it would be a waste of time applying for planning permission on someone else's land if you had not already made some arrangement with them to buy it in the event of your application being a success. This is because the benefit of the permission runs with the land, and not the applicant. So, at the very least, you should always enter into a legal agreement with the owners before you make the application.

This can be a fairly simple document that binds them to sell to you, and you to buy from them, in the event of the planning application being successful. It may mention the price, but if you are unsure - and if you do not want your potential deal to come to too much public notice - the document could leave the question of price to be resolved by reference to an independent valuer.

YOUR LOCAL PLANNING REGISTER

Study the planning register at the local planning office as it will have a note of all the planning applications that have been made in your area. Concentrate on those for single dwellings, houses or bungalows, and make a note of the applicant's agent. The agent may not wish to sell you the plot for a number of reasons, so always make sure you write to the applicant for the best chance. Speak to the applicant, who may well live next door, and tell them of your interest. Explain that you are not a developer, but a self builder. Although they have applied for planning permission, this does not necessarily mean that they are looking to sell their plot, so tell them that if they are ever interested in selling, you would be delighted to hear from them. Take care to add that you would be more than happy to pay a fair market price.

Perhaps nothing will come of your enquiry, but just maybe, a few months down the line, when the agent has introduced a builder who has offered less for the plot, who is taking a long time to complete the legalities and who is trying to get planning permission for a house that is much bigger than the owners would have liked, they may well give you a ring.



ACT QUICKLY

You might need to act quickly to secure your plot as good plots do not stay on the market for long. It makes sense to arrange your finance prior to going for a plot or attending an auction and discussing the likely timescales with your financial adviser