Maximising Returns for Landowners

Developing Land in Multiple Ownership

A Practical Guide for Landowners

How adjoining owners can co-ordinate planning, infrastructure, equalisation and sale to unlock one development opportunity.

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Developing Land in Multiple Ownership

A potential development site can extend across several fields, farms or registered titles owned by different people. The planning authority may assess the land as one logical location even though no single owner controls the complete opportunity.

The owners may need to co-ordinate access, drainage, utilities, open space, technical evidence and a common masterplan. A clear collaboration structure can help the combined site remain suitable, available and deliverable while protecting each owner’s position.

Several titles can form one development opportunity, but planning unity does not create legal or commercial unity.

Why can multiple ownership affect development?

Different parcels may make very different contributions to the scheme. One may contain the access, another the majority of the development, and another the drainage, biodiversity or open-space land needed to make the whole proposal acceptable.

- Present one coherent planning case and masterplan
- Confirm that every essential parcel is available
- Co-ordinate access, infrastructure and technical evidence
- Agree how planning and professional costs will be funded
- Establish how value, deductions and sale proceeds will be shared

Where does it sit in the development process?

Map titles and rights → agree collaboration terms → prepare one planning strategy → secure allocation or permission → market and sell the assembled opportunity

Read the full online Multiple Landowners Guide

Why Early Landowner Co-ordination Matters

A multi-owner site can appear attractive in planning terms but remain undeliverable if the owners have not agreed how the project will be managed. Councils and purchasers need confidence that the required land, access and infrastructure can be secured.

Early discussion allows each owner to understand the combined opportunity, the role of their parcel and the decisions that will need collective approval. It also creates time to identify title gaps, tenancies, mortgages or differing objectives before substantial expenditure is committed.

Fragmented control can weaken the planning case

Independent submissions, incompatible layouts or competing commercial terms can create uncertainty. A single access, drainage route or utility corridor may be essential to every parcel, so one unresolved ownership can delay the whole site.

Early agreements reduce later delay

A collaboration agreement can define governance, budgets, consultant instructions, confidentiality, planning submissions and the sale process. These matters are easier to agree before an allocation or permission increases pressure and value.

Planning and ownership boundaries are different

One registered title may contain several planning parcels, while one coherent development site may include parts of several titles. The project should map the land actually required for development, retained land, off-site works and third-party rights.

The best time to agree how owners will work together is before planning value and infrastructure dependencies become contested.

Request a Free Joint-Site Review

When Several Owners May Need to Work Together

Collaboration is most important where the combined planning opportunity depends on land, rights or infrastructure controlled by more than one person. The form of agreement should reflect the actual site and the contribution of each parcel.

Adjoining Development Parcels Fields or titles may need to be planned together to create a logical settlement extension, employment site or mixed-use scheme.	**Access & Visibility Land** One ownership may control the only practical junction, visibility splay, footway or route from the adopted highway.
Shared Drainage & Utilities Outfalls, attenuation, sewers, substations, pipelines or reinforcement may cross or serve several ownerships.	**Open Space & Environmental Land** Biodiversity, landscape, flood storage, heritage buffers or public open space may fall unevenly across the site.
Strategic Allocations A Local Plan allocation can combine separate farms or parcels and expect one coherent delivery strategy and evidence base.	**Phased Development & Sale** Different parcels may be developed or sold at different times but still depend on shared roads, obligations and equalisation.

What should the initial review establish?

- Exact titles, owners, occupiers and physical boundaries
- Which parcels and rights are essential to the scheme
- Whether access and infrastructure can be delivered
- The proposed use, capacity and planning route
- The role and likely contribution of each ownership
- Existing mortgages, covenants, tenancies and restrictions
- Whether the owners are willing to collaborate

A parcel does not need to contain buildings to be valuable: access, infrastructure or mitigation land can be essential to the whole opportunity.

Building a Strong Collaboration Framework

A landowner collaboration agreement sets the rules under which separate owners work towards a common planning and disposal objective. It should be prepared for the actual site and supported by independent legal, valuation and tax advice.

1. Define the land and parties — Identify participating titles, retained land, access land, occupiers, lenders and any ownership that may join later.

2. Agree the planning objective — Record whether the group is pursuing a Call for Sites submission, Local Plan allocation, planning application or combined strategy.

3. Establish governance — Set representation, voting thresholds, delegated authority, reserved decisions, reporting and a workable deadlock procedure.

4. Control costs and funding — Approve budgets, contribution shares, payment dates, audit rights, default consequences and treatment of abortive expenditure.

5. Agree equalisation principles — Explain how developable land, infrastructure land, shared costs, deductions and sale proceeds will be valued and allocated.

6. Regulate marketing and sale — Define the sale land, minimum protections, marketing method, bid assessment, purchaser selection, contracts and distribution of proceeds.

A strong collaboration agreement enables one coherent project without treating every parcel as though it makes the same contribution.

Request a Multiple-Landowner Review

Evidence That Can Support a Multi-Owner Site

The evidence should explain the combined opportunity and the dependencies between parcels. Technical work is most useful when it informs the masterplan, cost-sharing and equalisation rather than being commissioned separately by each owner.

Title & Boundary Review Official copies, deeds, surveys and occupation information can identify ownership gaps, retained land, mortgages, covenants and rights.	**Access & Highways** A joint access appraisal can show which land is needed for the junction, visibility, footways and off-site improvements.
Drainage & Flood Management A site-wide strategy can locate outfalls, attenuation and flood storage and allocate land and costs fairly.	**Utilities & Infrastructure** Capacity enquiries can identify shared connections, diversions, substations, reinforcement and third-party routes.
Landscape, Ecology & Heritage One constraints framework can direct development, open space, buffers and biodiversity measures across ownership boundaries.	**Masterplanning & Phasing** A co-ordinated plan can show parcel contributions, development phases, primary roads, drainage and community infrastructure.
Viability & Cost Planning A combined appraisal can test infrastructure, obligations, abnormal costs and the commercial effect on the assembled site.	**Valuation & Equalisation** Independent valuation advice can distinguish developable, access, mitigation and infrastructure land and model fair sharing methods.

The objective is one consistent evidence base, with every assumption about ownership, access, infrastructure, cost and delivery stated clearly.

How a Multi-Owner Site Can Progress

The sequence varies with the planning route, but a structured process can turn separate titles into one credible and marketable development opportunity.

1. Ownership and rights mapped — Confirm titles, owners, occupiers, lenders, boundaries, access land and off-site dependencies.

2. Joint site assessment — Review planning policy, settlement relationship, capacity, access, constraints, infrastructure and market potential.

3. Commercial principles agreed — Record heads of terms for governance, funding, equalisation, planning, marketing and landowner protections.

4. Collaboration agreement completed — Bind the owners and successors to the agreed process before substantial shared expenditure is incurred.

5. Planning promotion undertaken — Prepare one masterplan, evidence base, Local Plan representations or planning application for the combined site.

6. Allocation or permission secured — Resolve conditions, obligations, infrastructure and delivery matters so the planning outcome can be relied upon.

7. Co-ordinated marketing and sale — Present one due-diligence package, compare bids and complete simultaneous or interdependent contracts where required.

A planning allocation can identify one site, but the land is not sale-ready until ownership, authority, infrastructure and equalisation are also resolved.

Read: Title Plans, Ownership & Boundaries

Read: Land Promotion Agreements

What If the Owners Cannot Agree?

Disagreement can arise over value, access, budgets, timing, planning strategy or the amount of control each owner should have. The first step is to determine whether the disputed parcel is essential to the scheme or whether a technically acceptable alternative exists.

A disagreement should be addressed through evidence and the governance process rather than allowing informal assumptions or pressure to decide the outcome. Independent planning, legal and valuation advice can separate genuine contribution from strategic leverage.

A focused response can include:

- Mapping the precise land, rights and infrastructure in dispute
- Testing alternative access, drainage, layout or phasing options
- Obtaining independent valuation and equalisation advice
- Using mediation, expert determination or another deadlock route
- Agreeing options, promotion terms or conditional arrangements
- Revising the site boundary where the scheme remains deliverable

Avoiding ransom and holdout problems

A small parcel can have substantial leverage where development cannot proceed without it. Early collaboration can agree rights and value before planning expenditure increases the stakes. Equally, the wider group should not assume that every narrow strip deserves a disproportionate share where alternatives exist or the claimed contribution is not supported by evidence.

The aim is not identical treatment of every acre; it is transparent treatment of each parcel's genuine contribution, costs and risk.

How Can Multiple Ownership Affect Land Value?

Combining adjoining land can create a more coherent, accessible and deliverable development site than the parcels could achieve separately. The assembled opportunity may support greater capacity, shared infrastructure and stronger competition from developers.

That value does not arise automatically. Planning status, access, net developable area, infrastructure, obligations, title, phasing and the certainty that all essential owners will complete remain important. An unresolved ownership or ransom position can reduce purchaser confidence and price.

Value is not always proportional to acreage

One parcel may accommodate most of the development while another supplies the only access, drainage basin, school land or habitat mitigation. A fair commercial structure should recognise genuine contributions without assuming that every acre has the same use or value.

Equalisation can share value and burdens

An equalisation arrangement can redistribute sale proceeds or value where development and infrastructure fall unevenly. The formula may use acreage, developable area, valuation categories, agreed percentages or a hybrid approach, with approved costs and deductions applied transparently.

For multiple owners, the key question is not only what each parcel is worth alone, but what value the combined site can create and how that value should be shared.

Find Out What Your Combined Land May Be Worth

How Value My Land Can Help

Value My Land can review adjoining ownerships as one planning opportunity and help establish whether a co-ordinated promotion strategy is realistic. The aim is to clarify the site, the dependencies between parcels and the route towards planning and sale.

Combined Site Review We assess planning context, settlement relationship, ownership pattern, access, constraints, infrastructure and potential capacity.	**Multi-Owner Strategy** We help identify the participating land, essential rights, planning route, evidence priorities and broad programme.
Technical Team Management We can co-ordinate access, drainage, landscape, ecology, heritage, utilities, masterplanning, viability and other evidence.	**Planning Promotion** We can manage Call for Sites submissions, Local Plan representations, applications, consultation responses and appeals where appropriate.
Collaboration Support We work alongside the owners’ solicitors and valuers so planning, governance, equalisation and sale assumptions remain aligned.	**Competitive Marketing** Following a successful outcome, the assembled opportunity can be presented consistently and offers compared on price and certainty.

Promotion Agreements

Where Value My Land enters into a Promotion Agreement, we fund and manage the agreed planning and technical work at our own cost and risk. The collaboration agreement can sit alongside that promotion structure and regulate the relationship between the separate owners.

Each owner retains their land until sale and should obtain independent legal, valuation and tax advice. Our agreed fee and recoverable promotion costs become payable from the sale proceeds in accordance with the completed agreements.

Request a Free Joint-Site Assessment

Should the Owners Work Together?

If adjoining land may form one stronger development opportunity, send Value My Land the location, approximate ownership boundaries and known access position for a free, no-obligation initial assessment.

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Value My Land

Delivering Co-ordinated Development

Further reading: Multiple Landowners Guide | Title Plans & Boundaries Guide | Promotion Agreements | Selling Land for Development

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