



Value My Land

Maximising Returns for Landowners

Title Plans, Ownership and Legal Boundaries

A Practical Guide for Landowners

How title extent, access rights, ownership gaps and retained-land protections can affect planning, promotion and sale.



Value My Land

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Title Plans, Ownership and Legal Boundaries

Before land is promoted or sold for development, the legal ownership and access position should be compared with the physical site and the proposed planning boundary. Title documents answer different questions from measured surveys and planning plans.

An HM Land Registry title plan usually shows the general extent of registered land rather than an exact legal boundary. Small gaps, ransom strips, unregistered parcels, private rights, restrictive covenants, wayleaves and third-party interests can materially affect access, development capacity and value.

A title plan usually shows the general extent of registered land rather than the exact legal boundary. The title, physical site and development proposals should be reviewed together.

Why should title and boundary issues be checked early?

Legal title matters can influence the masterplan, planning application, technical evidence, promotion agreement and eventual transfer. Early review helps distinguish issues that are manageable from those that could prevent access, reduce the developable area or complicate a future sale.

- Compare the registered title with the physical occupation of the site
- Confirm whether the land reaches the adopted highway and controls the proposed access
- Identify ownership gaps, ransom strips and unregistered areas
- Review easements, covenants, wayleaves, leases and other title matters
- Protect retained land when new rights or sale boundaries are created

Where does title due diligence sit in the development process?

Official copies and plans → ownership and rights review → measured survey → masterplan and planning boundary → promotion / application → transfer plan and sale

[Read the full online Call for Sites Guide](#)

Understanding the Title Register and Title Plan

A title register and title plan should normally be read together. The register identifies the registered proprietor and contains property, proprietorship and charges information. Filed deeds may contain the detailed wording or plans behind rights and restrictions.

The title plan is a graphic representation of the general extent of the registered title. It is not a substitute for a measured topographical survey and should not automatically be treated as proof of the exact position of a fence, hedge, ditch or legal boundary.

Property register

The property register describes the registered land and may refer to rights benefiting it. Those rights can be important where development depends on access, drainage or service connections over adjoining land.

Proprietorship register

This identifies the registered owner and may contain restrictions controlling dealings with the title. The correct legal owner must be able to enter the proposed agreement and sale documents.

Charges register

Mortgages, restrictive covenants, easements burdening the land, leases and other entries may affect design, planning, funding or sale. The underlying deed should be obtained where it contains the operative detail.

The register and plan answer different questions and should be reviewed with any filed deeds and the physical site.

[Read the Access and Highways Guide](#)

Does the Red Line Show the Exact Legal Boundary?

The red edging on a title plan normally identifies the general extent of the registered title, not the exact legal boundary. A fence, hedge, ditch or track on the ground may follow a different line, and mapping detail can change over time.

Registered Ownership Confirm the legal owner, title number and any restrictions affecting the ability to enter an agreement or sale.	Title Extent Compare the general registered extent with physical occupation and the proposed development boundary.
Access to Highway Check whether the title and legal rights connect the site to the adopted highway at the proposed access point.	Private Rights Map rights of way, drainage, services and other easements needed to implement the scheme.
Restrictions & Interests Review covenants, mortgages, leases, wayleaves and other matters that may affect development or sale.	Retained Land Protect access, services, boundaries and future potential where only part of the ownership is being sold.

What should be checked where the title and site do not appear to match?

- The title register, title plan and any filed conveyances or transfer plans
- Historic plans, photographs and evidence about physical boundary features
- The current topographical survey and site inspection
- Adjoining titles and any relevant unregistered land
- Highway boundary information where access is critical
- Rights of way, drainage and service rights crossing the boundary
- Whether specialist legal or boundary-surveying advice is required

A difference between the title plan and a physical feature does not by itself establish that either line is legally wrong. The evidence should be reviewed proportionately, with priority given to boundaries that affect access, sale land, infrastructure or development capacity.

Title Plan, Topographical Survey and Planning Red Line

Different plans can cover the same site while serving very different purposes. A title plan supports the registered title; a topographical survey records specified physical features and levels; a planning red line identifies the application site.

1. **Title plan** — Shows the general extent of registered ownership and works with the title register and filed documents.
2. **Topographical survey** — Measures physical features, levels and site information used by designers, engineers and planners.
3. **Planning red line** — Defines the land included within a planning application; it can include land outside the applicant's ownership if the correct notice and certificate procedures are followed.
4. **Transfer plan** — Defines the land and rights being transferred on sale and should comply with HM Land Registry requirements.
5. **Ownership and rights plan** — Can bring titles, occupiers, access, easements, restrictions, ransom risks and off-site dependencies together for the project team.
6. **Common survey base** — The legal, planning and technical teams should use a coordinated base and flag differences rather than silently forcing one line to match another.

Using the correct plan for the correct purpose reduces errors in design, ownership certificates and sale documentation.

[Read the Topographical Surveys Guide](#)

Ownership Gaps, Ransom Strips and Highway Boundaries

Small areas of land can control a much larger development opportunity. Due diligence should examine the connection between the registered title, adopted highway, proposed access and every off-site work needed by the scheme.

Title Plan Shows the general extent of registered land and supports the title register.	Topographical Survey Records measured physical features and levels for design and technical work.
Planning Red Line Defines the land included within the planning application and ownership-certificate process.	Transfer Plan Defines the land and rights transferred on completion and must be suitable for registration.
Ownership & Rights Plan Combines titles, occupiers, access, easements, restrictions and off-site dependencies.	Highway Boundary Plan Helps test whether the proposed access connects lawfully to the adopted highway.
Boundary Evidence Plan Can relate historic deeds and physical features to a measured base where a line is disputed.	Common Project Base Keeps legal, planning and technical documents aligned while preserving their different purposes.

An access shown on a concept plan should not be assumed deliverable until ownership, highway extent, level differences, visibility, private rights and any third-party land have been checked.

Easements, Covenants, Wayleaves and Other Title Matters

A ransom strip is a parcel controlled by another party that is needed to unlock access, services or development. Its strategic value can be far greater than its physical size. Gaps may also arise unintentionally between a title and the highway, or between adjoining ownerships.

1. Check the highway connection — Compare titles, site survey and highway-authority information before assuming that the ownership reaches the adopted road.

2. Identify strategic strips — Look for verges, ditches, field margins, service corridors or narrow parcels between the development site and essential infrastructure.

3. Investigate unregistered land — Historic deeds, adjoining titles, index searches and evidence of possession may be needed where ownership is unclear.

4. Review private access rights — Confirm route, width, purpose, vehicle use, maintenance, ability to improve the surface and whether development intensification is within scope.

5. Consider service rights — A development may need rights to connect, lay, use, repair and upgrade drainage, water, electricity or other apparatus.

6. Choose a proportionate solution — Acquisition, easement, agreement, first registration, insurance, redesign or another legal route may be appropriate depending on the risk.

7. Avoid late surprises — Critical access or ownership issues should be investigated before major planning expenditure or developer marketing.

Private rights can enable development, constrain it or create obligations that must be reflected in the masterplan and transaction.

Read: Restrictive Covenants and Development Land

Read: Developing Land in Multiple Ownership

Boundary Agreements, Determined Boundaries and Disputes

The title may benefit from rights needed for development or be burdened by rights that shape the masterplan. The register entry can be only a summary, so the filed deed should be reviewed where it contains the operative wording or plan.

Rights and restrictions should be mapped against the proposed scheme so the planning team understands what can be used, what must be protected and what may require release, modification, consent or redesign.

Common title matters include:

- Rights of way, including route, width, purpose, users and ability to improve
- Drainage and service easements, including connection, repair and upgrade rights
- Restrictive covenants affecting use, building, density or development
- Public rights of way, wayleaves, utility apparatus and safety zones
- Mines, minerals, sporting, agricultural or other reserved rights
- Leases, licences and occupation affecting access or vacant possession

Planning permission does not override private rights

A planning consent can authorise development in planning terms while a restrictive covenant, missing access right, lease or ownership issue still prevents implementation. Planning and legal deliverability therefore need to be assessed together.

The appropriate solution depends on the evidence, the importance of the line and the development programme.

Unregistered Land, Multiple Ownership and Retained Land

Where a boundary is uncertain, the response should reflect the quality of evidence, the importance of the line and the development programme. Not every discrepancy needs formal determination, but critical boundaries should not be ignored.

Evidence can include official copies, filed deeds, historic conveyance plans, photographs, declarations, previous surveys and information about when hedges, fences or other features were created or moved.

Boundary agreements

Neighbours may agree and record a boundary line. HM Land Registry guidance distinguishes an agreed boundary from a determined boundary; an agreement does not automatically convert the title from the general-boundaries basis.

Determined boundaries

Where the exact legal line has been established and the evidence and plan meet the statutory requirements, an application can ask HM Land Registry to record it as determined. HM Land Registry does not decide the underlying boundary dispute for the parties.

Title strategy should support both the development site and any land that the owner intends to retain.

Find Out What Your Land May Be Worth

A Practical Title and Boundary Due-Diligence Sequence

Unregistered land can still be owned and sold, but ownership is established through deeds and evidence rather than a current registered title. Missing deeds, unclear descriptions or succession issues can increase work and affect buyer confidence.

Obtain Official Copies Collect title registers, title plans and filed deeds for the site and any critical adjoining land.	Prepare an Ownership Plan Map titles, occupiers, access, rights, restrictions, ransom risks and off-site dependencies.
Compare With the Site Use inspection and topographical survey information to identify differences in occupation or boundaries.	Prioritise Critical Issues Resolve or manage matters affecting access, infrastructure, planning certificates, sale land or lender confidence.
Integrate With Planning Feed title constraints and rights into the masterplan, technical work, planning application and obligations.	Prepare for Sale Organise title information, agreements, survey material and a clear transfer plan so purchasers can price the land efficiently.

Multiple ownership and site assembly

A development site may include several titles or owners. Collaboration or matching agreements may be needed to coordinate planning, infrastructure, access, cost sharing, equalisation and sale. Title information therefore feeds directly into commercial structure and deliverability.

When only part of a holding is sold, the transfer should protect the retained land. Access, drainage, service capacity, visibility splays, construction rights, boundaries and future development potential should be considered before the final sale plan is fixed.

[Request a Free Development Potential Assessment](#)



Review the Planning Opportunity and Apparent Title Constraints

Provide the land location and any known title, access or boundary information. Value My Land can give an initial development-potential review and highlight matters for specialist legal or surveying investigation.

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Clear Ownership. Deliverable Access. Protected Retained Land.

Further reading: [Topographical Surveys](#) | [Multiple Landowners](#) | [Restrictive Covenants](#) | [Access & Highways](#)

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