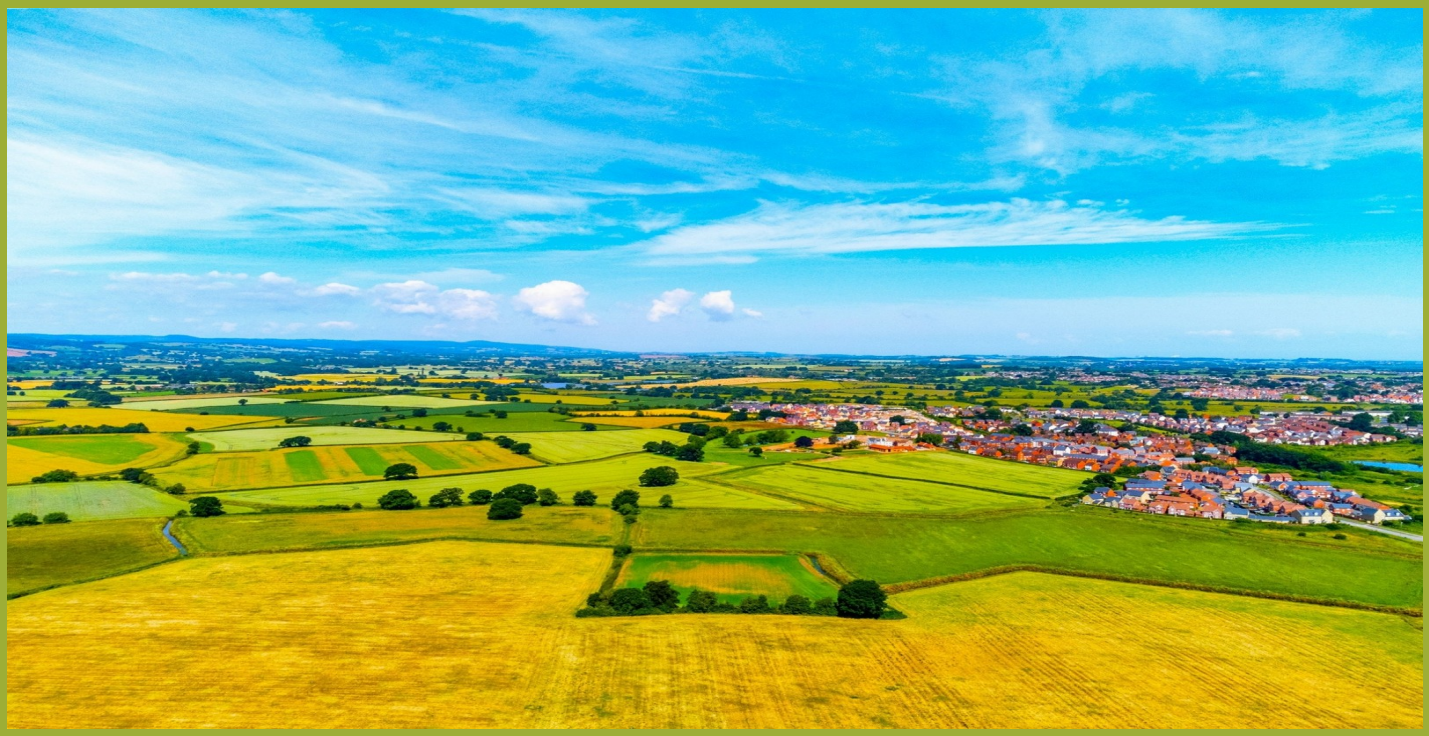
Value My Land

Maximising Returns for Landowners

Access and Highways for Development Land

A Practical Guide for Landowners

How to assess site access, visibility, sustainable connections, highway capacity and mitigation before promoting or selling land.



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Access and Highways for Development Land

Safe and suitable access for all users is a fundamental part of establishing whether land can support housing, employment, commercial or mixed-use development. A site may have planning potential, but that potential can be limited if the proposed access cannot be delivered safely or connected effectively to the surrounding movement network.

Highway assessment extends well beyond the existence of a field gate or road frontage. Visibility, recorded vehicle speeds, junction geometry, gradients, walking and cycling routes, public transport, servicing, emergency access, traffic generation, nearby junctions and control of all required land may need to be considered together.

A field gate or road frontage does not prove that a safe, suitable and deliverable development access can be achieved.

Why should landowners assess access early?

An early highways review can prevent a planning strategy, valuation or agreement from being based on an access that is unsafe, outside the owner's control or disproportionate to the proposed scale of development.

- **Identify whether a credible vehicular access can be formed from land under the owner's control**
- **Test visibility, road geometry, gradients, frontage, recorded speeds and physical obstructions**
- **Consider safe walking, wheeling and cycling connections as well as vehicle movements**
- **Match the proposed use and capacity to likely trip generation, servicing and network effects**
- **Understand the land, mitigation, highway agreements, cost and programme needed for delivery**

Where does access sit in the process?

Site and title review -> preliminary access concept -> speed, visibility and all-user checks -> site assessment or allocation -> proportionate transport evidence -> planning and highway approvals -> construction and adoption

Read the full online Access and Highways Guide

Why Access and Highway Evidence Matters

A site can relate well to a settlement and perform positively in planning policy terms, yet still be difficult to develop if the access relies on inadequate visibility, a narrow bridge, steep geometry, third-party land or an unsafe pedestrian route. Access should therefore be treated as a central development parameter rather than a detail to be resolved after capacity has been fixed.

The local highway authority will normally consider the access, internal layout and effects on local roads. National Highways may also become involved where the strategic road network could be affected. The evidence and design standard should be agreed for the particular road context and scale of development.

A safe junction is only one part of the solution

The scheme may also need appropriate footways, crossings, cycle links, bus access, refuse and service vehicle movements, emergency access, parking, turning and connections to local facilities. A vehicle-only design can weaken the sustainability and safety case.

The necessary land and rights must be controlled

Visibility splays, carriageway widening, a new footway, drainage, retaining works or a relocated access may extend beyond the main development parcel. Title boundaries, highway extent, hedges, ditches and third-party interests should be checked before the solution is relied upon.

Network impact and mitigation affect delivery

Larger schemes may require traffic counts, trip forecasts, junction modelling and mitigation. Improvements can include junction works, crossings, walking and cycling links, public transport measures, travel planning or phased contributions. Their cost and timing can affect capacity, viability and land value.

A credible access strategy integrates land control, safety, sustainable connections, capacity, mitigation, cost and delivery - not just a junction drawing.

Read: Title Plans and Boundaries Guide

Key Access and Highway Issues at a Glance

A credible access strategy is based on site and movement evidence, not a generic road-width or visibility assumption. The information should be proportionate and focused on the issues most likely to affect suitability and delivery.

Access Control & Frontage The owner should control the junction, visibility, widening, footway and drainage land or have a realistic route to securing the necessary rights.	**Visibility & Geometry** Measured speeds, sight lines, levels, gradient, road width, radii, obstructions and maintenance determine whether the access can operate safely.
All-User Connections Walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport, crossings and links to services should be considered alongside vehicle movements.	**Traffic & Junction Capacity** Trip generation, distribution, nearby junctions, cumulative growth and network resilience may require proportionate assessment and mitigation.
Servicing & Emergency Access Refuse, delivery, emergency, agricultural and commercial vehicles need suitable routes, turning, parking and operational space.	**Mitigation & Delivery Costs** Highway works, land, agreements, utilities, drainage, maintenance, monitoring and phasing can affect viability, timing and value.

What information should be assembled?

- **The site boundary and control of land for access, visibility, widening, footways and drainage**
- **Road type, speed limit, measured speeds, alignment, width, gradient and collision context**
- **Proposed use, realistic capacity, likely trips, parking, servicing, refuse and emergency movements**
- **Walking, wheeling, cycling and public-transport connections to services and settlements**
- **Nearby junctions, bridges, crossings, cumulative development and planned improvements**
- **The highway authority's design guidance, evidence expectations, consultation process and likely agreements**
- **Retained-land access, third-party rights, construction routes and future phases**

The early review should establish whether safe access can be achieved for all users and whether wider transport effects can be addressed within a deliverable strategy.

How a Potential Development Access Is Usually Assessed

The assessment normally develops from a high-level feasibility review into a defined access and transport strategy. The level of evidence should increase as the site moves from early promotion through allocation, planning permission and detailed highway approval.

1. Define the land and possible route - Confirm the ownership boundary, public highway extent, road frontage, existing gates, third-party land and the areas that may be needed for access, visibility, footways or infrastructure.

2. Understand the existing highway - Record the road type, traffic character, width, alignment, gradient, speed environment, pedestrian provision, public transport and nearby junction or network constraints.

3. Test access location and visibility - Compare possible access points, measured speeds, sight lines, geometry, levels, vegetation, structures and the land required to keep visibility available over time.

4. Provide for all users and operations - Consider walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport, parking, servicing, refuse collection, emergency access, delivery vehicles and any retained agricultural or business movements.

5. Estimate trips and wider effects - Use a proportionate development assumption to review traffic generation, distribution, junction capacity, cumulative growth and the potential need for network or sustainable-transport mitigation.

6. Agree evidence and delivery - Discuss the scope with the relevant authority, prepare the appropriate appraisal, Statement or Assessment, and identify design approvals, conditions, legal agreements, land and funding needed to implement the solution.

The correct access solution depends on the road context, measured evidence, intended development and the needs of every user.

Read: Why Location Matters

The Main Access Evidence and Design Checks

Evidence should be proportionate to the scale, location and likely impact of the proposal. A small site may need a focused access appraisal, while a strategic allocation can require multimodal modelling, infrastructure phasing and ongoing engagement with several transport bodies.

Highway Feasibility Appraisal

An early review identifies possible access points, obvious land or geometry constraints, sustainable links and the work needed to test the opportunity.

Speed & Visibility Evidence

A survey may record vehicle speeds and support context-specific stopping sight distance and visibility assessment rather than relying only on the speed limit.

Access Geometry & Swept Paths

Drawings test junction form, carriageway width, radii, levels, turning and the movements of refuse, emergency, service or other relevant vehicles.

Walking, Cycling & Public Transport

The strategy should show how users can reach local services, stops and networks safely, directly and inclusively.

Transport Statement or Assessment

A Statement is a lighter-touch evaluation; an Assessment is more detailed. The scope should be proportionate and agreed with the relevant authority.

Junction & Network Modelling

Larger or more sensitive proposals may require traffic counts, trip forecasts, distribution and modelling of local or strategic road impacts.

Road Safety Review or Audit

Where required, an independent safety process can identify problems in the proposed highway design and inform an appropriate designer response.

Travel Plan & Mitigation

Management measures, active-travel improvements, public transport, monitoring and physical highway works may form a coordinated mitigation package.

No single report replaces professional judgement. The access design, speed and visibility evidence, movement strategy, traffic analysis, safety review and mitigation should form a consistent case based on the same boundary, capacity and development assumptions.

Access and Highways Through the Planning Process

Access and highways are considered repeatedly as land moves through the planning system. An early conclusion can change when the site boundary, capacity, evidence, infrastructure or policy context changes, so the landowner should monitor the transport position at each stage.

1. Initial site and title review - Road frontage, highway extent, access ownership, third-party land, obvious physical constraints and sustainable connections are checked before the land is promoted or controlled.

2. Call for Sites submission - The council is given a credible access concept and proportionate information rather than an unsupported statement that an existing field entrance is suitable for development.

3. HELAA or site assessment - Officers may record access, pedestrian connectivity, network or infrastructure concerns and reduce, defer or reject the site where the information is uncertain.

4. Draft allocation and Local Plan work - More coordinated transport evidence may be needed to compare alternatives, test cumulative growth, safeguard infrastructure and demonstrate a deliverable movement strategy.

5. Planning application - The proposal may require a Transport Statement or Assessment, access drawings, speed and visibility evidence, swept paths, safety work, a Travel Plan and defined mitigation.

6. Detailed highway approvals - Conditions, technical design, drainage, land dedication, commuted sums and works to the public highway may need separate approval and legal agreement before construction.

7. Construction and operation - Access, traffic management, construction routes, temporary works, monitoring and sustainable-travel measures must be implemented and maintained as approved.

Highway evidence becomes more detailed as the site progresses, but the boundary, capacity and access assumptions should remain consistent.

Read: Call for Sites Guide

Read: Local Plan Allocation Guide

Visibility, Highway Capacity, Mitigation and Third-Party Land

Access objections often arise from a combination of issues rather than one missing dimension. Visibility may depend on measured speeds and vertical alignment; a technically possible junction may still lack a safe footway; or network mitigation may rely on third-party land, funding or an uncertain programme.

A targeted response should identify the precise concern, the standard or evidence used by the authority and whether a revised access location, smaller capacity, different land parcel, additional connection or phased mitigation would create a more credible solution.

A focused access strategy should address:

- **Measured speeds, stopping sight distance, visibility measurement, obstructions and control of the full splay**
- **Junction form, carriageway width, radii, gradient, levels, drainage, turning and swept paths for relevant vehicles**
- **Safe pedestrian, wheeling and cycling routes, crossings, lighting and links to services and public transport**
- **Trip generation, distribution, cumulative development, junction capacity and network resilience where relevant**
- **Ownership, highway boundary, hedges, trees, walls, ditches, utilities, structures and third-party permissions**
- **Mitigation design, planning conditions, highway agreements, funding, phasing, maintenance and delivery timescale**

Do not rely on a standard visibility number

Visibility and geometry are context-specific. The relevant authority may use Manual for Streets, Manual for Streets 2, local highway design guidance or, for trunk-road circumstances, standards associated with the strategic road network. A transport consultant should agree the assessment basis, including speed data, stopping sight distance, measurement points, vertical alignment and maintenance of the splay. If safe and suitable access cannot be demonstrated, the boundary, capacity or development route may need to change.

A highway concern should be defined precisely and tested against a realistic alternative, mitigation package and delivery route.

How Do Access and Highways Affect Development Capacity and Land Value?

Access can unlock or constrain the development opportunity. A strong solution may support allocation, permission and purchaser competition, while an uncertain or expensive solution can reduce capacity, delay planning, narrow the buyer market or prevent development altogether.

The value effect remains site-specific. Road category, frontage, all-user connectivity, traffic impact, infrastructure, third-party land, abnormal works, planning obligations, phasing and the effect on retained land can all change the amount a buyer can justify for the site.

Access defines the usable development opportunity

The access, visibility, footways, crossings, drainage, landscape and internal road network can use land that might otherwise be counted as developable. A junction location may also shape the masterplan, restrict density, require the purchase of additional land or sever access to retained fields and buildings.

Mitigation costs and programme affect the net receipt

Junction improvements, signals, road widening, bridges, retaining structures, public-transport measures, active-travel links, utility diversions, highway drainage, safety works and monitoring can create substantial cost and delay. The sale or promotion strategy should reflect who funds the work, when it must be delivered and how the obligation affects the landowner's net proceeds.

The strongest strategy protects a deliverable access for all users while controlling infrastructure cost, programme and effects on retained land.

Find Out What Your Land May Be Worth

How Value My Land Can Help

Value My Land can undertake a free initial review of the site, planning context and apparent access constraints before the owner commits to major technical expenditure, a sale or long-term agreement. We can identify the issues that require specialist transport advice and ensure the access strategy is considered alongside capacity, drainage, landscape, ecology, infrastructure and value.

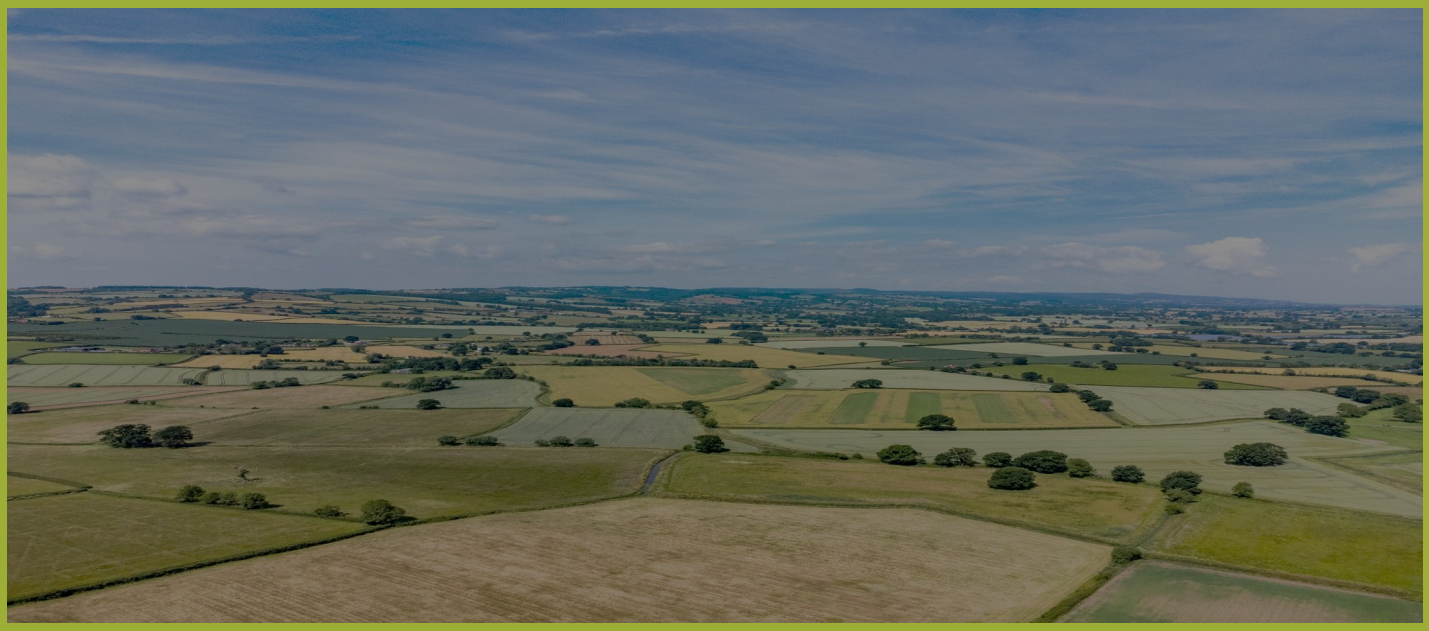
Free Access & Development Review We review the site location, frontage, policy context, apparent connections and principal constraints before major expenditure or terms are agreed.	**Site & Title Control Review** We identify the land that may be needed for the access, visibility, footways, drainage, works, retained access and future phases.
Highway Feasibility Strategy We help define the questions for a transport consultant and ensure the access concept matches the proposed use, scale and planning stage.	**Capacity & Constraints Review** We consider how access geometry, movement corridors, mitigation and infrastructure may affect the realistic development area and layout.
Technical Team Management Where evidence is proportionate, we can coordinate transport, highways, drainage, planning and other specialists as one promotion strategy.	**Promotion Route & Next Steps** Where appropriate, we can discuss funded promotion and identify the plans, evidence and independent advice needed before commitment.

Our Promotion Agreement Route

Where appropriate, Value My Land can fund and manage the agreed planning and promotion process at our own cost and risk. This can include appointing and coordinating the transport and highway specialists needed to test access, support Local Plan promotion and prepare a planning application.

If the agreed planning outcome is not secured, the promotion costs are written off in accordance with the agreement. Following planning success, the land is normally marketed to competing third-party purchasers. Our remuneration is linked to the sale proceeds achieved, while the landowner retains ownership until sale.

Request a Free Access Review



Can Safe and Suitable Access Be Achieved?

Send Value My Land the site location, approximate boundary, road frontage and any plan, council assessment, highways comments or consultant advice available. We can provide a free, no-obligation initial review of the development opportunity and identify the access, connectivity and evidence issues that should be considered next.

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Value My Land

Delivering Sustainable Development

Further reading: Access and Highways Guide | Title Plans and Boundaries | Why Location Matters | Local Plan Allocation Guide

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