

PLOT FINDING

Background Information

There are a number of potential sources worth exploring for self-build plots.

They include:

- Plotfinder.net
- The LandBank partnership
- Government Property Finder
- Replacement dwellings (via using local and online estate agents)
- Conversions opportunities under Permitted Development.

Planning Policy

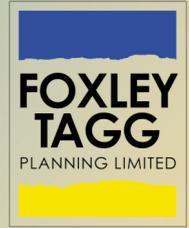
It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policy. This will help give you an understanding of the sorts of locations that may or may not be considered suitable for new residential development.

Your local council's planning policy will come in the form of either a:

- Local Plan
- Development Plan
- Core Strategy

Some local plans have policies which specifically encourage self-build so it is worth finding out if your local council has such a policy, which is normally part of the housing policy section of their plan.

Also consider the status of the council's Local Plan—the plan may recently have been adopted or the council may have an emerging Local Plan.



Pre-Planning

If you find a site which you believe may be suitable for a new dwelling you may wish to consider undertaking a pre-application enquiry with the council to ascertain whether they feel the site is appropriate for development.

Your local authority will offer advice based on initial concepts that you submit to them. Pre-applications are particularly useful on complex sites or where the principle of development is not clear.

When considering a new site...

- The principle of development is key
- The 'sustainability' of a site will be a major consideration
- A site assessment and detailed preparation are fundamental
- Pre-application submissions can be very useful
- Detailed reports are needed for submission

PLOTFINDING CHECKLIST

1. Is the site in a sustainable location?

- Demonstrating a site is 'sustainable' is key.
- Could one walk/cycle/travel by public transport to local services, amenities and facilities, including employment, shops, schools, etc?
- Walking distances should be no greater than approximately 800m.

2. Is the site within a settlement boundary?

- Sites within (or sometimes adjacent to) the settlement boundary are generally more achievable than those in open countryside.
- Outside settlement boundaries development is usually limited to: replacement dwellings; agricultural workers' dwellings; conversions; affordable housing; housing allocations.

3. Can the site be considered 'infill'?

- Infill development is normally looked upon favourably.
- Is it a gap in an otherwise built up (road) frontage?

4. Is it 'Brownfield' land?

- Development of brownfield land is normally encouraged.
- 'Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land'.
- As defined in the NPPF it does not include garden, forestry or agricultural land.

5. Is the site in a designated area?

- Green Belt? Permission for new builds in the Green Belt is extremely difficult to achieve.
- Conservation Area? Does not preclude development but does make design, size and massing *extremely* sensitive.
- National Park and/or AONB? Permission is more difficult to achieve.

6. Is the site within a Flood Zone?

- Can be a major constraint.
- In Zone 2 an FRA will be needed; in Zone 3 new build development is unlikely.
- Check your site here: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

7. Can access be achieved?

- Access relates to vehicles and pedestrians/cycles.
- Accesses must meet highway safety standards and visibility is key.
- Parking will also be required in most instances.

8. Could there be any ecological issues?

- Most virgin greenfield sites will require a Stage 1 Walkover to ascertain the possibility of protected species etc.
- Where trees or old buildings are to be removed, bat surveys may be required; If there are ponds or standing water on or near then newt surveys may be needed. There are many other ecological issues that may arise so specialist assistance is recommended.
- Surveys are generally required before a decision is made and there are specific survey timeframes for different species.

9. Are there any trees on site?

- Trees in Conservation Areas and those with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are protected.
- Works to or to remove protected trees need planning permission.
- An Arboricultural Assessment may be needed and an application may require a tree protection plan.

10. What is the topography of the site like?

- Sloping sites can cause problems and increase costs, although design solutions can utilise the constraint.
- Topographical surveys are recommended to provide an accurate base for plans and to establish constraints.

11. What is the relationship with neighbouring properties?

- Position and location of other buildings is a key consideration.
- Need to minimise overlooking; Schemes should not be overbearing.
- 21m from the window of a new building to an existing building; 14m from a new window to blank wall is recommended.

12. Might the site have archaeological deposits?

- This is more likely to be an issue in Conservation Areas.
- County Archaeologist will be a consultee to any planning application.
- Desktop and walkover study normally required, results will dictate the need for further work.

13. Could noise be an issue?

- Near major roads, railways, airports or industrial areas an assessment may be needed.

14. Might the site be contaminated?

- Sites with old industrial or other uses may be contaminated, as might sites near industrial locations or former coal working areas.
- Initial desktop walkover will be required if so.
- Results may call for intrusive surveying and/or testing.

Foxley Tagg Planning Ltd are experienced practitioners with regard to mainstream planning matters such as new housing for self and custom builders.

We would be happy to hear from you with regard to any potential site with view to undertaking a free desktop assessment. Please send details of the land or site to Foxley Tagg. We normally require a location plan, site address and postcode details in addition to a summary of what you would like to achieve.

www.foxleytaggplanning.co.uk

office@ftplanning.co.uk

01242 222 107

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