

From mountain to sea

Empty Homes/ Selling your empty home – Developer Day



Summary

Some empty properties, because of their size, condition or location may be suitable for an alternative use i.e. a large residential property could become a commercial venture like a hotel or a redundant commercial premises could be converted into flats. This information leaflet outlines the potential for an alternative marketing strategy for empty properties. If your empty property seems to be stuck on the market in its current use, for instance as a “home”, you could explore other uses for the property and market it with a Developer Day.

What is a Developer Day

A Developer Day is a type of open day where specific parties who may be looking for a property with potential for an alternative use are invited to view the empty property to ascertain its potential. This could be developers, businesses, registered Matchmaker Buyers, or existing property owners who may be looking to expand or relocate to new premises. The difference between a Developer Day and a standard open viewing is the one off targeted nature of the event as well as the amount of additional information provided to potential buyers.

Where to start

What type of property are you selling? Does your selling agent have experience of promoting alternative uses for residential properties, or any suggestions on a change of use for your property? The agent may already be aware of a potential buyer looking for an opportunity which may be suitable for your property. You may also wish to approach the Council for the area that your property is in and speak to the following sections:

Planning: Planning officers can assist with planning policy matters that will inform a Change of Use for the property. The property may be in an area restricting certain uses, or indeed an area where a commercial enterprise might be sought. Planners can advise you of the relevant planning policies that affect your property.

Remember any guidance is only “in principle” and issues may come to light during consideration of an actual Planning Application which cannot be identified prior to that process. For instance, the Highway Agency may have an issue over access, or the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) could be concerned about a flood risk issue.

Leisure & Tourism: The Leisure and Tourism section may be able to advise you of any studies that have been carried out in the area where a particular need or facility to enhance leisure and tourism has been identified.

Economic Regeneration: This section can advise of any local social, cultural and economic plans for the area, or signpost you onto partner agencies that may have an interest in, or have links to, organisations interested in acquiring a property with commercial potential.

Outside the council: There may be an Area Forum or Community Plan that has information on existing activity in the area, and has identified a gap for a service or business that could be accommodated in your property. Alternatively, they may be able to signpost you onto interested parties who helped to develop the plan. Carry out an internet search of the locality, or ask your council’s local office for contact details for these groups. If the property is in a rural area, contact the Rural Housing Service for advice and guidance. The website is:

<http://ruralhousingscotland.org/>

Next Steps

In order to host a Developer Day, the information you have gleaned from your local council or other sources needs to be worked up into a Brief. This document would include the existing sales particulars for the property, any existing current Planning Permissions but also suggest “in principle” alternative uses.

The purpose of the Brief is to provide developers with a tool for reducing the risk on a project. A developer will work up a detailed scheme, but the initial document should ensure that, in principle, the proposals are appropriate, and provide confidence and a degree of certainty through the planning process and to provide clarity on potential development opportunities.

Property Development Brief

The Brief should outline the potential for the site and the benefits for the wider community. There are various ways of writing the document but generally the type of information contained within a development brief is as follows:

Local Context

A brief outline of the area, such as proximity to settlements, or other local businesses compatible with the proposal, for example:

- Which settlement is the property in/near?
- Is the area within a conservation area or have any specific land restraints?
- What other facilities are available, public houses, leisure facilities, shops etc.?

Policy Context

Following discussions with the local authority, what plans or policies will shape the development of the site, these can include economic development proposals, such as town centre policies, but more likely to have Planning input, such as:

- Planning Policies
- Supplementary Planning Guidance

Site Analysis

This is a general description of the property, and is likely to already be included in sales particulars with your Estate Agent.

- Description of the site, for example how the home sits within the wider landscape. For example “the site is located adjacent to a farm ½ mile from the main settlement of...”
- What “in principle” is the potential of the site following your discussions with planners, i.e. Bed & Breakfast, Outward Bounds hotel or other.

Opportunities

Following discussions with the local authority and your Estate Agent, the brief should include the positives of the site, such as:

- The site currently has good vehicular access, open views, or being southerly facing to maximise green energies.

Development Vision

This section should detail the aspirations for the site, giving a vision of what the development will give to the property but also the wider community and how it will meet the need in that area.

Marketing the Developer Day

Your existing Estate Agent should be able to assist with setting up the event - even if they've not heard of the Developer Day concept before it is similar to an open day (which they will be familiar with), just with added information to promote the property's potential. They could work in partnership with a commercial selling agent who may have wider experience in this field. If there is broad development potential linking to the council's strategies, then invite a council officer to attend. Your selling agent should be able to answer questions about the property raised on the day.

Some Empty Homes officers can access mailing lists held by the Planning Section, and may be able to use that list to circulate details of the event to agents, architects and developers to supplement the marketing strategy of your agent.

It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that the property is shown at its best. For advice on how to ensure a positive impression of the property, read the **Selling your empty home - Increasing Saleability** leaflet. This gives advice on preparing your property for viewings, and comes with a check list to make sure you don't miss anything.

Who else to invite

Consider who else you could invite to add value to the day, i.e. who will have information that a potential buyer might want? For example:

- Local Planning Officer
- Local building or construction firms
- Representative from a local tourist board Local Economic Regeneration Officer
- Local Conservation Officer
- Anyone else who can speak with authority about the potential of your property or need in the community for the potential alternative use.

✉ **Contact Aberdeenshire Council if you have an empty home and would like further advice:** emptyhomes@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

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