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Blue Bricks Magazine

THE PROPERTY INVESTOR MAGAZINE

UNVEILING THE TRUTH ABOUT TITLE SPLITTING:

TITLE SPLITTING MYTHS EXPOSED

KIRSTY DARKINS - COMMERCIAL VS RESIDENTIAL

ADAM LAWRENCE - MARKET PREDICTIONS FOR 2025

THE DEVELOPERS CLUB - AN OUTLOOK ON THE UK'S HOUSING MARKET

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ISSUE 31 | NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Sam Cooke
Editor of Blue Bricks Magazine

A few shots of our past columnists enjoying Issue 30

New year, new me!

It's the saying we hear every year. But here's a fun fact for you: In 2024, 33% of people in the UK who made New Year's resolutions said they kept them all, while 45% said they kept some of them.

Because the thing is, motivation fades, and when it does, all that we have left is discipline, knowledge, and the right people around us who will push us forward.

Look, I'm not a mindset coach, so I can't help you with discipline. But what I can do is make sure that I fill this magazine with all the knowledge you need to make 2025 YOUR year, and fill our online and in-person events with great people who want to see you succeed.

This brings me perfectly to what this issue is all about: giving you everything you need to take 2025 by storm.

Everything you need to make 2025 YOUR year

As our first magazine of 2025, this issue has been packed full of market insights, predictions, and deep dives into the property strategies that are going to take off in 2025.

Adam Lawrence perfectly demonstrates this with his article on market predictions for 2025, and how you can set your goals for the year ahead.

Jay Howard and **Piotr Rusinek** share an equally valuable article, with their recap of the 2024 auction market, and how they project auctions will perform throughout 2025.

Alongside glimpsing into our crystal ball of property, we have highly useful articles on topics ranging from interior design 'trends' by **Louise Wynne**, and building a brand to raise finance by **Oliver James**.

This issue is jammed full of information that'll help you master investment strategies, increase your profitability, and prepare for everything 2025 has to offer.

So, without further ado, dig in, and as ever, if we can help you with anything, email the team at **hi@bluebricksmagazine.com**.

Let's make this year YOUR year, and if we can do anything to support that, just let us know.

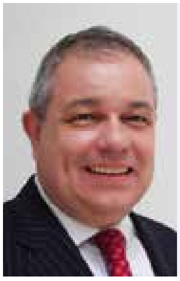
MEET THE COLUMNISTS

Andy Graham

Andy is a seasoned HMO property investor and serial entrepreneur with extensive experience across the UK since 2009. He has built multi-million-pound property portfolios, founded and exited a successful investment and management agency, and established 'The HMO Community©' and 'The HMO Roadmap,' the UK's most extensive online HMO training platform.

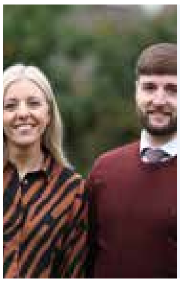
Adam Lawrence

Adam has completed over 800 property deals across the UK. A property obsessive and economics enthusiast, he works as a consultant/advisor in his spare time. Holding two Master's degrees, Adam has a deep focus on Economics and a passion for property investment.



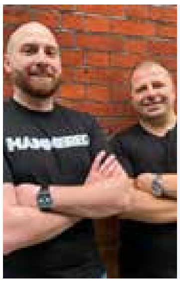
Des Taylor

Des is a seasoned HMO landlord and co-founder of Landlord Licensing & Defence, dedicated to helping landlords and letting agents navigate legal challenges, council enforcement, and compliance with housing laws. With decades of experience, he champions fully managed services as essential for landlords' long-term success.



James & Victoria McCulloch

James and Victoria have leveraged their successful corporate careers to build essential skills and pursue their freedom to full-time property investing. They have focused on building a successful rent-to-rent business, as well as having their own single-let portfolio. Going forward, they aim to continue scaling their rent-to-rent business and expanding their portfolio for serviced accommodation.



Jay Howard & Piotr Rusinek

Jay spent over 20 years in the UK property game, from managing thousands of high-stakes transactions with a Private Family Office managing £3.3bn to becoming a co-founder of HAMMERED. Piotr co-runs HAMMERED and Auction Buyers Club with Jay, where they work to make auctions more accessible for those eager to grow their portfolios.

Landlord Furniture Co

In 2016, landlord Dale Wild had finally had enough of wasting time and money on poor-quality, flat-packed furniture that was simply not fit for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) tenants. He needed a better solution: sturdy furniture, built to last, all while still being appealing and stylish. So, utilising contacts he made while running a successful sofa company, Dale got to work, and Landlord Furniture Co was born!

Kirsty Darkins

Kirsty is a Chartered Surveyor with over 20 years of experience managing commercial and residential property portfolios across the UK and Ireland. As the founder of KD Commercial, she specialises in commercial property investments and mentoring, with a focus on building passive income and financial freedom.

Louise Wynne

As a high-demand interior designer, Louise leverages colour and pattern to boost property investors' returns quickly. She collaborates with major housebuilders on showhome interiors and educates independent investors on design's financial benefits. Louise writes for industry publications and speaks at property networking events, highlighting the vital role of colour in maximising returns.

Łukasz Rybak

Łukasz is a property investor and the founder of Aquila Connect, an online portal connecting property investors with over 200 deal sourcers.

Malkit Purewal & Sanjay Kumar

Malkit and Sanjay are multi-award-winning developers from Savoys Properties. They have been in the property industry for 24 years, specialising in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) for 15 years and commercial-to-residential conversions for 12 years. The duo have been featured in The Times newspaper, appeared on BBC Radio 4, and won three International Property Awards as well as three awards at the Property Investor Awards.

Michael Allison

Michael has a long history in finance, and has been part of the Roma family for just under four years, where he now works as the Commercial Director. Michael is passionate about collaboration and creating healthy workplace cultures.

Oliver James

Oliver is the founder of Property Branding, where he combines his eight years of property investment and development expertise with marketing acumen. His dual perspective helps clients become investable, stand out, and achieve growth objectives through powerful branding and effective marketing solutions.

Rachel Knight

Rachel Knight is the foremost expert in Title Splitting in the UK today. Her company, Titlesplit.com, is helping investors learn how to split commercial property, apartment blocks, and land.

Rebecca Shipley & Ruth Shipley-Palmer

Becky and Ruth, the Honest Property Sisters, are business owners, property investors, and hosts of The Honest Proper Tea Podcast. Since 2014, they've built a multimillion-pound portfolio and a supportive, honest community. With 12+ years of experience, they're passionate about making property investing accessible, fun, and free of social media fluff for beginners.

Rupert Lowe

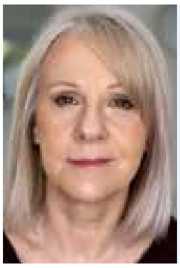
Rupert Lowe leads the Direct team at CrowdProperty, leveraging more than 30 years' property sector experience, specialist knowledge in business development and insolvency, and an impressive network across the UK. Rupert also established his own surveying business, servicing clients such as Taylor Wimpey, Golding Estates and Atticus Land & Development.

Richard Forth

Richard is Managing Director and Founder of Equatas Accountants, which he started 19 years ago. Richard has a strong background in chartered accountancy, having qualified in 1995, and a deep expertise in forensic accountancy, specialising in insurance litigation, commercial litigation, and fraud investigation.

The Developers Club

Founded in 2022 by brothers Shiro (35) and Shaunak (30) Rauniar of SATIS Group, award-winning developers in Manchester, alongside Tex Jones (35), a London-based property developer leading Impact Capital Partners and specialising in PBSA schemes. The team focuses on commercial-to-residential conversions and office developments. Together, they had a vision of bringing together some of the UK's most ambitious and passionate SME property developers under the age of 40.



Tina Walsh

Tina developed a passion for law during her time as a police officer. So, when she moved into property sourcing, she was surprised at how unregulated the sector was. Tina has since made it her mission to raise standards for property sourcers and protect property investors from rogue agents

Tom Sumner

Tom is an established property investor, developer, and mentor who started his career in the military before eventually transitioning to being a full-time investor. One of the property businesses that Tom owns is a luxury serviced accommodation brand, Swish Holiday Apartments, which was featured on the front cover of the last issue of Blue Bricks Magazine.

MARKET PREDICTIONS FOR 2025

HOW TO SET YOUR GOALS AND PREPARE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Adam Lawrence
Founder of Propenomix

Hopefully, you've set your goals for 2025.

You know the drill. According to the 1979 *Harvard* study, 84% had no goals, 13% had set written goals but no concrete plans, and 3% had written goals and clear plans.10 years later, the 13% were earning twice as much as the 84%, but the 3% were making 10x what the other 97% were...

Either way, what can get in the way of your property goals? Well, the market, of course. That's why I spend so much time researching, and frankly obsessing, over it.

This article is the result of my obsessions and contains my predictions for the year ahead.

The Market: The Biggest Obstacle

I made no friends in a property meeting in January 2015 when the high-profile keynote speaker asked, *"What's the biggest danger to property investors this year?"* and I said, without hesitation, *"The interest rate".*

"Why?" he asked. *"Because it is the only variable we cannot control,"* I replied confidently. That isn't strictly true, on reflection - for example, we don't control the regulatory landscape.

We know we have a *Renters' Rights Bill* coming, and we know pretty much what it looks like (because we have such a large majority in the incumbent party). Minor tweaks may occur, but major changes are unlikely.

Personally, I'm not worried by this. However, there is precedent for this in Scotland (on the 1st of December 2017 the *Private Residential Tenancy* was introduced, abolishing the fixed term) and in Wales.

The rental markets have not yet fallen apart in either location - indeed, all that's moved is rents upwards (not that that isn't happening in England!).

I AM worried for student houses in multiple occupation (HMO) landlords, however, because the abolition of the fixed-term tenancy does not benefit. The hacks? Ensure student tenancies end on 30th June 2025 and the next ones start on 1st July 2025.

Consider professional HMO or social HMO, but if you've paid a premium for a student property in an A4 area, prepare for any or all of the following:

- More risk
- Lower returns
- Volatility while the market settles.

You can either be proactive, or reactive. I wouldn't be buying or creating student HMO at the moment (on a macro level), but there will still be niche opportunities where there are major shortages, of course.

Understanding the Cost of Debt and Inflation Trends

What are the macro variables that are relevant, other than the interest rate? Well, firstly we need to remember that the interest rate is not the base rate of interest, that everyone talks about - but the cost of debt is a function of the 5-year SONIA swap rate, the rate at which banks lend other banks money (swapping floating rate debt for fixed rate debt).

Then, remember that the interest rate is related to future expectations around inflation, so that holds significant importance.

Inflation Projections for 2025

I first started writing about the oncoming inflation wave in February 2021.

At the time, the *Bank of England* was making enquiries about what would happen if interest rates went negative, but it was obvious that the amount of stimulus that had been injected into the UK economy would be inflationary.

It's been a journey, and one I've followed very closely, leading me to form several views and predict the inflation rate with a very reasonable degree of near-term accuracy in the following months and years.

My expectations for 2025 are that, all else being equal, we will hover around the 3-3.25% mark for *Consumer Price Index* (CPI) inflation (the *Bank of England* benchmark) for most of the year.

Economic slowdown would reduce this slightly, while external shocks could push it the other way (oil prices, energy prices, food supply chain issues, just to name a few).

That sort of number is not conducive to cutting interest rates (now thinking of the base rate), but I see the *Bank of England* base rate ending 2025 at around 4.25%, with two cuts throughout the year — one early and one in the middle of the year.

In the current landscape, it is hard to justify going under 4.25% in my view until more of this inflation works its way through the system.

"LET PROPERTY IS EITHER SELLING TO THE 'NEW BREED' OF INSTITUTIONAL LANDLORD OF THE FUTURE ... OR FTBS"

Fixed Rates, Swap Rates, and Investment Strategy

The swap rate at the turn of the year was around 4% for the 5-year, putting the cost of debt in a limited company with no fee attached at about 6% (you can just add a 2% margin onto the swap rate at any time as a loose rule of thumb, although product rates change on a weekly and monthly basis, whereas swap rates change on an hourly and daily basis).

I don't see this materially moving downwards - there's room for it to go to 3.75% or perhaps even 3.5% which would be very welcomed, but I don't see things going a lot cheaper than that.

As a result, don't wait to fix rates, but likewise, if your existing investments don't work at a 6% debt rate, either asset manage them more aggressively (rents up, convert to HMO, short-term rental, or something else) or sell them.

There's no room in this game for negative gearing (where the cost of debt is greater than the gross yield minus operational costs) - it is highly risky, and bad for your wealth, in my opinion.

An Outlook On 2025's Rental Market

We also want a healthy labour market, of course, as property/asset owners.

Those likely to do the "best" - this is in relative terms, not absolute terms - are those on minimum wage jobs, ideally not in the retail or hospitality sector (manufacturing is also struggling).

Their 6.7% pay rise will be well ahead of the rest of the working sector, especially in this year where there is a massive increase in the cost of employing staff (any businesses of size, say employing 10+ staff, if they were all at minimum wage, will see a cost increase of 10.75% per full-time equivalent come April).

If you keep your job, you will see a genuine lift in after-tax disposable real income, after inflation.

Rents, however, are up 9.1% at the last count (figures for November 2024 from the *Office of National Statistics*).

That's going to be above almost anything else, and that tends to be "sticky" - it won't fall fast, and my expectation for rent rises for 2025 on average is 7%.

This, plus a higher-than-average inflation rate, still makes property investment very attractive.

Combine it with my expectation for capital growth (I've plumped for 3.75% on my "dart" for 2025), which will diminish the nominal value of any mortgages, means that yields should increase over the course of next year, and investors should finish the year looking better off on existing stock than when they start.

A Resilient Mindset for Success

So, it's a year, in my view, where you can do nothing and make money, presuming you already hold some stock.

However, that would be a crying shame, because opportunity will be knocking.

The major narrative is bound to be around the *Renters Rights Bill* and how it is impossible to be a landlord, it isn't worth it anymore, and all that jazz.

A smokescreen, to be honest, because those operating at a scale or seeking to operate at a scale are just quietly getting on with acquisition in the background.

Let property is either selling to the 'new breed' of institutional landlord of the future - who has worked out that they need 10+ units to make it worthwhile, and are expecting to pick these up over a 5+ or ideally 10+ year business plan - or selling to first-time buyers (FTBs).

This only favours two people: the FTB themselves, and the remaining landlords, because that's one more unit out of a private rental sector that is still growing by demand and number, not least due to significant increases in the population mostly driven by positive net migration.

Resilience will, once again, be a key attribute, parsing the headlines for what is truly relevant, rather than listening to the constant scaremongering that the clickbaiters pump out daily.

RENTS, HOWEVER, ARE UP 9.1% AT THE LAST COUNT (FIGURES FOR NOVEMBER 2024 FROM THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS).

Make your decisions with clarity, based on facts, data and trends, not what everyone else is saying and doing.

Do the same as everyone else, and all you will do is get the same result - I'm sure you know the quote about the definition of insanity!

Be financially attractive, well-organised, well-capitalised and stay hungry, and 2025 can be a great year.

At the end of it, the balance of probability says that houses will be yet more expensive, rents will be yet higher, and it will cost more to buy the same stock on January 1st, 2026, than it did on January 1st, 2025.

My Goals for 2025- Can You Help?

Hopefully, some of the above can inspire some confidence in my opinion of the direction of travel, and also the relatively non-volatile nature of the returns that I'm expecting in 2025 - and why I'm going to be continuing to build my portfolio in a positive direction.

My goal - in case you are interested – is 125 new units acquired.

Numbers aren't always the best way to do it: because you can buy 125 flats in a terrible location for £20,000 each that is market price or would mean you are overpaying, and just buy a headache - but I like single units (or portfolios of them, or blocks of freehold flats) - because they are tradeable.

So, I'm sticking to the numbers. They have to meet my yield criteria anyway.

What's the PLAN to get there? More relationships with sourcers, auction houses, and property traders. If you can help, please feel free to reach out via my *LinkedIn*!

Thanks for reading, and I look forward to providing more insights in future issues of *Blue Bricks Magazine*.

CONTACT ME

LinkedIn: Adam Lawrence

THE BELIEVE SYSTEM

HOW TO BUILD AN UNSTOPPABLE MINDSET FOR 2025

The biggest thing that holds people back is themselves. Deep down, we all know this, which is why topics like 'mindset' are so popular in our industry.

I've never been one for fluffy affirmations. In my eyes, self-praise is no praise. However, I do believe that the way you view yourself plays a huge role in your success — not just as a property investor, but in life as a whole.

The military and my time in business have helped me to build a mindset that has taken me from the lowest of lows to feeling like I've won the lottery of life. With time and reflection, I have managed to develop it into a six-step process, which I call **BELIEVE.**

B: Believe in You
E: Environment
L: Limitless
I: I Am
E: Evolve
V: Values
E: Energy

Here's how it works:

B: Believe in You

If you don't believe in yourself, no one will. And the thing is, no matter how many people tell you they believe in you, it won't make a difference. Because even if you have all the knowledge in the world, if you don't believe you can achieve your goals, you'll never take action.

But how do you believe in yourself? In the military, we called it a 'CONDOR moment.' This refers to the moment you step back, assess what you want to achieve, and then evaluate how you're going to achieve it. It's usually used by commanders when under effective enemy fire, but it can be used in your personal life too!

Assess what's putting you down or holding you back. Is it a past experience, a person, or your environment? Sometimes, growth requires walking away from what no longer serves you.

E: Environment

A positive environment is critical. You need to be around like-minded people, talking about your interests and being mentally stimulated.

> A QUICK MINDSET TIP
>
> **The first stage of getting out of a negative mindset is to get up early, get in the gym, and start working on yourself. Honestly, get up while everyone else is asleep, get in the gym for an hour, and come back to me in a month. The endorphins from that, and having a routine, will help you.**
>
> **You don't have to change your life tomorrow. Make little changes slowly, and take small steps while you build your confidence.**

If you don't change your environment, then how do you expect to meet potential joint venture partners, investors, and clients? It certainly won't happen with all the energy drains down at the local pub.

A positive environment is also vital for your mental health. Entrepreneurship is a lonely journey, and property investment is hard. You must be around people who can help you and who have the answers to the challenges you'll inevitably face.

L: Limitless

You must be limitless in your mind. The only limit that you have on your success is the one that you put on yourself. When you believe that anything is possible, everything becomes possible.

I: I Am

"I am" is the way to overcome imposter syndrome. It's about finally believing you are a successful investor, developer, business owner, or anything else you want to be.

99% of the time, imposter syndrome is caused by the worry of how others judge us. But 1% of imposter syndrome is caused by our belief in ourselves. If you can flip that 1% over, believe in you, and stop caring what other people think, you've finally beaten imposter syndrome.

At the end of the day, the people who judge you aren't putting food on your table. They're not the ones helping you. If you're really bothered about what particular people think of you, then block them on social media and forget they exist!

I let other people's doubt fuel me. If they spent as much time on themselves as they did bringing other people down, they'd be in a better place.

E: Evolve

You need to constantly evolve, both as a person and as a property investor. The world, the economy, and our industry are ever-changing. If you don't evolve, you'll be left behind.

Also, look at ways you can 'evolve' a property deal to make it stack. For example, can you add more rooms to a building or achieve planning gain to increase the deal's end value?

Grow yourself, and continuously seek to grow your knowledge, and you'll always be one step ahead in this industry.

V: Values

Values are everything. You only need to look at the catastrophe of a bad joint venture to see this. Ultimately, most partnerships fail because the partners' values don't match.

Tom Sumner
Co-Founder of Swish Holiday Apartments and
Owner of Beyond Property Training

The values you share with someone are more important than your joint goals and vision. If you want 100 properties, and your partner wants 50, you can still go on that journey together and grow. But if you both value different things, then this is a recipe for arguments and financial strain later down the line. Never scramble to do a deal with someone just because they have money. Take time to ensure they are someone you want to work with and that their ethics align with yours; this is the pathway to success!

E: Energy

I believe in something very simple: Be a radiator, not a drain. The attitude I turn up with on-site dictates the morale of my refurb team, which affects the quality of their work.

The quality of their work dictates how well my business does, which dictates how much I earn. If I turn up to site with a negative attitude, then that will infect them. Likewise, a positive attitude makes my team want to work harder.

No one wants to be around people who drain energy. So, my advice is to be someone who people want to spend time with.

The first step is to BELIEVE

The BELIEVE system is the first thing that I teach in my training programme because, without it, you'll never succeed. It's how I've managed to build what I've built and have the life that I'm blessed to live today.

If I can help you with your mindset or your property journey, then contact me using the details below. Make 2025 your year — the year you finally BELIEVE in yourself!

CONTACT US

Thomas Sumner
beyondpropertytraining
info@bbnw.co.uk

PropertyEngine
Market analysis

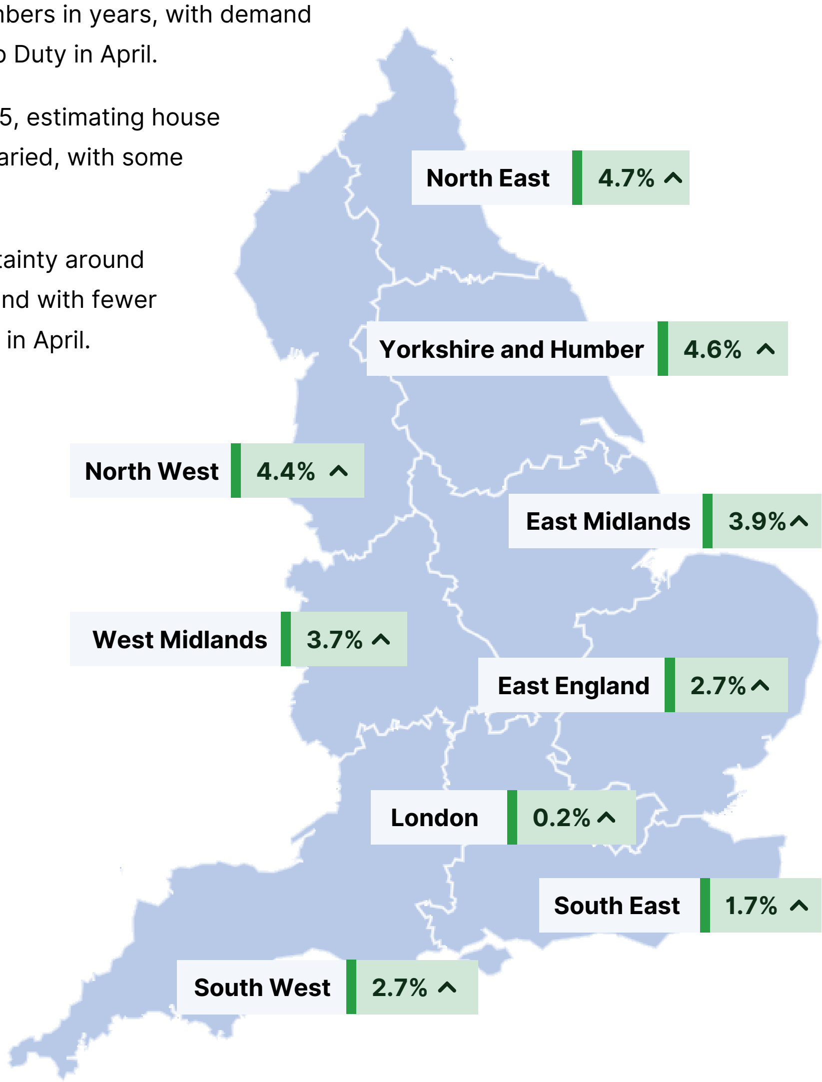
February 2025 | **Market Update**

The UK housing market has seen one of the busiest Decembers in years, with demand likely heightened ahead of the upcoming changes to Stamp Duty in April.

Nationwide Building Society predicts steady growth in 2025, estimating house prices to rise by 2%-4%. Regional performance has been varied, with some areas outperforming the national average.

With the upcoming Stamp Duty changes in April and uncertainty around borrowing rates, we might continue to see increased demand with fewer sales falling through, followed by the market slowing down in April.

Region	1 year	5 years	Yield
Bolton	8.5% ^	43% ^	7.4%
Rochdale	7.0% ^	42% ^	5.5%
Wigan	6.3% ^	36% ^	7.6%
Carlisle	5.7% ^	13% ^	7.7%
Weston-Super-Mare	5.6% ^	28% ^	5.8%
Grimsby	5.4% ^	16% ^	8.0%
Bradford	5.0% ^	25% ^	8.6%
Bedford	4.6% ^	19% ^	7.1%
Birkenhead	4.3% ^	26% ^	8.6%
Swansea	4.3% ^	23% ^	7.1%
Middlesbrough	-7.2% v	4% ^	9.9%
Blackburn	-7.6% v	15% ^	8.5%
Darlington	-8.6% v	8% ^	7.2%



Regional house price data credit HM Land Registry.
Local data and yields calculated using PropertyEngine analysis of these areas with data from the major portals and HM Land Registry sold price data.
For more info on how these numbers are calculated, visit propertyengine.co.uk/bluebricksdata

2024 AUCTION MARKET RECAP

KEY INSIGHTS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIE AHEAD FOR 2025

Jay Howard & Piotr Rusinek
Founders of HAMMERED and The Auction Buyers Club

The UK auction market in 2024 was shaped by the dynamic interplay of economic, political, and legislative changes. From shifts in government policies to the effects of fluctuating interest rates, the year brought us some significant highs and lows, reshaping the landscape for buyers, sellers, and investors.

There are several untapped opportunities for intrepid or experienced investors, traders, and developers in the market.

In this article, we will delve into the key drivers of market performance, the types of properties that dominated the auction market, and the factors that influenced their success.

The Impact of a Change in Government

The transition to a new government following the 2024 general election was a pivotal moment for the property sector. The incoming administration's policy priorities, which included housing affordability and increased social housing stock, created a ripple effect of sentiment across the auction market.

Early indications of proposed reforms, such as the expansion of compulsory purchase powers for local authorities, have led to an uptick in distressed properties entering auction rooms nationwide.

Sellers have sought to offload properties potentially affected by changes in interest rate rises (increased cost of debt/holding), the ageing landlord population, or one of the standard "D, D, D's" of selling at auction: Death, Debt, or Divorce.

Moreover, the government's focus on increasing opportunities for first-time buyers and bolstering regional infrastructure investments led to increased activity in areas previously considered less attractive. Auctioneers in regions such as the Midlands and Northern England reported higher attendance and stronger bidding activity, particularly for residential lots with development potential.

Interest Rate Changes

The Bank of England's monetary policy was another critical factor. With inflation pressures persisting, interest rates rose steadily throughout the year, peaking at 5.75% by Q4, with a single 0.25% rate reduction in time for the December auction sales, which caused mixed results.

On one hand, higher borrowing costs dampened demand from leveraged buyers. Many investors found their cost of capital prohibitively high, leading to a decline in speculative acquisitions, especially in commercial and high-value residential segments.

On the other hand, rising rates prompted an increase in market stresses, as struggling landlords and overstretched homeowners were unable to meet their mortgage obligations. This contributed to a surge in distressed stock levels, particularly in the residential auction market.

One of the more stoic elements in auctions has been the accessibility and cost of bridging finance. Unlike other forms of property finance, bridging has more or less remained unchanged since COVID.

While traditional lenders have been affected by interest rate rises, bridging has not. This is partly due to how these different products are priced and where the funds come from.

That's not to say that it is cheap; it just means that it hasn't fluctuated greatly since the interest rate rises came into play.

Before The Hammer Falls, written by Jay Howard & Piotr Rusinek

Legislative Changes and Their Impacts

Legislation also played a significant role in shaping the auction market. The Renters' Reform Bill, introduced earlier in the year, had a notable impact on the buy-to-let sector.

With the abolition of Section 21 'no-fault' evictions and the introduction of stricter landlord licensing requirements, many small-scale landlords opted to either exit the market or shift their focus from residential property to commercial property, development, or trading.

Their properties, often tenanted or vacant and requiring significant refurbishment, have become regular fixtures in many auction catalogues.

Conversely, the government's relaxation of planning regulations for converting commercial properties into residential units boosted demand for vacant commercial lots. Developers capitalised on these changes to acquire retail and office properties in urban centres, aiming to repurpose them into residential units to meet the ever-increasing housing demand.

Property Types Dominating the Auction Rooms:

- **Residential Properties:** The residential sector remained the backbone of the auction market in 2024. While demand softened slightly for high-value properties in prime London areas, entry-level and mid-market homes in regional towns saw robust competition.

  Ex-council houses, properties with potential for modernisation, and those offering strong rental yields were particularly popular among buyers.

- **Commercial Properties:** The performance of commercial properties was more varied. Retail properties in secondary locations struggled due to declining footfall and rising vacancy rates.

  However, office spaces with potential for conversion to residential use found favour, as did industrial units in logistics hubs, reflecting the ongoing growth of e-commerce.

- **Distressed Assets:** Repossessed properties and distressed sales played a larger role in 2024 compared to previous years. Auctioneers reported that these properties often achieved competitive prices, as buyers sought value in a challenging economic climate.

- **Development Opportunities:** Land and properties with development potential continued to attract strong interest, particularly in areas benefiting from government-backed infrastructure projects.Brownfield sites, grey belt land, and vacant plots in commuter belts were hotly contested, as developers sought to address the ongoing housing shortage.

Regional Performance:

There remains a regional disparity in market performance, which was another defining characteristic of 2024. This is expected to change from April next year, as the SDLT changes will make lower-value properties more attractive simply by reducing the frictional costs of transactions.

- **London and the South East:** These regions saw subdued activity, with high-value residential and retail properties struggling to achieve reserve prices. However, demand remained steady for properties in emerging areas with regeneration potential.

- **The Midlands and North:** These regions experienced a surge in activity, driven by affordability and government infrastructure investment. Buyers showed particular interest in properties near new transport links or designated enterprise zones.

- **Scotland and Wales:** Auction activity in Scotland and Wales remained consistent, with residential properties in smaller towns and rural areas attracting strong bids. The devolved governments' housing policies, which focused on affordability and rural regeneration, supported this trend.

Highs and Lows of the Market

HIGHS

- **Increased participation from first-time buyers and developers targeting affordable stock.**
- **High levels of interest in development opportunities, particularly in regions benefiting from government investment.**
- **Competitive bidding for repossessed properties, as buyers sought value amidst economic uncertainty.**
- **Fire-damaged, water-damaged, and structurally challenged properties saw consistent and robust prices at auction.**

LOWS

- **Declining demand for high-value residential and commercial properties in prime and super-prime locations.**
- **Challenges for retail properties, particularly in struggling town centres.**
- **Reduced participation from leveraged investors, constrained by higher borrowing costs.**

Looking Ahead

As 2024 comes to a close, the auction market stands at a crossroads.

While challenges remain, including the prospect of further interest rate changes and continued economic uncertainty, there are reasons for cautious optimism.

The new government's commitment to infrastructure and housing affordability could stimulate demand in underperforming regions, while legislative changes are likely to bring more stock to the market.

For investors, 2025 could present significant opportunities to capitalise on these shifts, provided they adapt their strategies to the evolving landscape.

In conclusion, the 2024 auction market was a year of transition, marked by both challenges and opportunities.

By understanding the key trends and adapting to changing conditions, investors and buyers can position themselves for success in the year ahead.

Thank you for reading, and thank you to Property Auction Insights from EIG for providing key data points and inspiration for this article.

A huge thank you also to the auctioneers who provided direct feedback over the past 12 months — don't worry, I'll keep pestering you in 2025!

Happy bidding,

Connect with the authors on LinkedIn

- Piotr Rusinek
- Jay Howard
- HAMMERED Auctions

COMMERCIAL VS RESIDENTIAL

WHY MANY LANDLORDS ARE CHANGING INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

Kirsty Darkins
Investor, Mentor & TV Presenter

"Is residential property still worth it?"

I know that's what many residential investors have been asking themselves recently. Questioning whether their long-term strategy actually stacks up, or if it'd just be easier to stick their cash in an index fund and hope for the best. And let's face it, while most landlords would agree that it is still worth it, the increasing burden of compliance, coupled with growing challenges such as the *Renters' Reform Bill*, has transformed property investing from a rewarding side hustle into a full-fledged business with substantial obstacles.

However, while residential landlords grapple with 175+ rules and regulations, commercial property investment may offer a simpler, more profitable, and less stressful alternative.

I know this for a fact because I've been involved in commercial property for the best part of 25 years — having spent a large part of my career acquiring and managing commercial property for companies like *Boots, CBRE, and Hammerson.*

It wasn't until 2016, however, that I decided to start my own consultancy and begin building my own portfolio of commercial property investments — which has grown from £10,000 in cash to a £3 million commercial portfolio (leveraging other people's money).

In this article, I'll share why commercial property could be the best option for you to diversify your investments — and why the common misconceptions about commercial property shouldn't hold you back from getting started.

Residential Landlords: The Struggle to Survive

It's no secret that recent changes in the residential property market have made it harder than ever to succeed as a landlord.

The Renters' Reform Bill has introduced stricter tenant rights, no-fault evictions are being phased out, and rent arrears recovery can take up to nine months due to court delays — a number that's not likely to go down any time soon!

Add the government's digital "Bad Landlord" database and increasing penalties for non-compliance, and the landscape looks more challenging by the day.

For landlords aiming to keep costs down, avoiding rent increases to retain tenants might seem like a sensible move. However, with rising operational expenses, this strategy often sacrifices profitability. One residential landlord I spoke with hasn't increased rents for five years, essentially running their properties as a charity rather than a business. As investors, we have to ask:

"Does it make financial sense to continue in a sector where the costs, rules, and time burdens outweigh the returns?" For many, the answer is *"no."*

Why Commercial Property is Worth a Closer Look

Commercial property offers a radically different experience for investors. Unlike residential properties, where the landlord handles nearly everything, tenants in commercial leases usually assume responsibility for maintenance, repairs, and property upkeep.

I know that for my clients — many of whom are former residential landlords — this alone has been an absolute game-changer! And here are some of the other key differences that make commercial property stand out:

1. Fewer Rules and Regulations

Residential landlords contend with over 175 laws and regulations, from energy standards to tenant eviction rules. In contrast, commercial leases come with just a handful of obligations:

- Provide "quiet enjoyment" of the property (i.e., don't disrupt the tenant's use).
- Arrange building insurance (with the cost recharged to the tenant).
- Offer building services, if applicable, via a service charge (again, at the tenant's expense).

This lower regulatory burden means less administrative hassle and reduced legal risk, making commercial a compelling alternative — particularly for more 'hands-off' investors.

2. Efficient Rent Recovery

Recovering rent arrears is notoriously slow in residential letting. But with commercial property, landlords have quicker, more cost-effective options:

- Drawing down from rent deposits, which are held directly by the landlord and require no consultation or negotiation, as terms are documented in the tenant lease.
- CRAR (Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery): A 21-day process involving notices and bailiffs, often resolved within 14 days using just the initial letters.
- Repossessing the Property: If rent remains unpaid, landlords can change the locks and re-let the property, usually within days.

Needless to say, these remedies can save inordinate amounts of time, money, and stress, compared to the painful nine-month ordeal of recovering rent arrears in residential lettings.

3. Predictable Rent Increases

Any seasoned investor will know that, in residential lettings, rent increases are subject to tenant challenges and market conditions.

In commercial leases, however, rent reviews are typically built into lease agreements, often linked to inflation or set at fixed increments. This ensures steady income growth and helps preserve your property's value over time — without any of the hassle you may be used to.

Opportunities in the Current Market

The commercial property market offers some exciting opportunities, especially with everything going on in today's economic climate. Here are some of the benefits you may not know about:

1. Tax Advantages

Commercial property investors can take advantage of capital allowances, reducing taxable income by offsetting the costs of items such as lighting, heating, and air conditioning systems, claiming between 20-30% of the purchase price on average.

Additionally, unlike with residential property, you have the option to invest directly through your pension, providing a tax-efficient way to grow your portfolio.

2. Post-Budget Momentum

Recent budget changes have made residential buy-to-let less attractive, with stamp duty surcharges for investors rising to 5%. In contrast, commercial property has remained relatively unaffected, maintaining its appeal as a lucrative alternative.

3. Diversification Opportunities

There's a common misconception that investing in commercial property means you need to go out and buy a big warehouse or prime office building.

But commercial property actually offers a whole range of asset types to suit various investment strategies — from multi-let retail units and offices to industrial warehouses and mixed-use developments.

And this kind of diversification can help you to mitigate risk and stabilise income — something I'm sure most of us wouldn't say "no" to!

How to Get Started in Commercial Property

If you're ready to explore commercial property, I've got good news! Despite what a lot of people think, you don't need millions to get started.

Small retail spaces, industrial units, and serviced offices can provide an affordable entry point, often delivering higher yields than traditional buy-to-lets. And while the funding options can differ from residential investing, there are still many options available!

But before you make your first step, consider these 3 tips:

- **Understand the Market:** Research local demand and trends. For example, while some people believe that high-street retail may be struggling, the opposite is actually true in many high streets nationally.
- **Know Your Tenant:** Businesses differ from residential tenants in their priorities and behaviours. Understanding your tenant's needs can lead to longer leases and fewer vacancies. They also work business hours, which means you do too!
- **Leverage Professional Advice:** Work with a commercial property agent or consultant to identify opportunities and negotiate favourable lease terms.

CASE STUDY

A STRUGGLING BUY-TO-LET LANDLORD'S FIRST COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEAL

DESCRIPTION

Location: Swadlincote, South Derbyshire

The property is a two-story building of traditional brick construction with a pitched, tile-clad roof.

On purchase, the ground floor comprised three units with three occupiers: a retailer, a healthcare operator (new tenant), and a restaurant. The healthcare operator also occupies part of the first floor, leaving the remainder of the first-floor office vacant.

Lease renewal and new letting were undertaken prior to completion, adding value from day one of ownership.

KEY FIGURES

Asking Price:	£350,000
Agreed Price:	£310,000
Income:	£33,833pa
Yield:	10.91%
Uplifted Income:	£37,833pa
Uplifted End Value:	£445,094
End Yield:	12.20%
Capital uplift:	43%
Value Add: Let the remainder of the 1st Floor* or achieve planning gain for conversion to flats**	

Numbers based on this scenario

The investor chose to obtain planning and flipped in auction in November 2024 for £408,000 for speed and certainty of sale

The Next Step: Learn More

To help you navigate the transition from residential to commercial property, I've created a free guide that covers everything you'll want to consider, so you can make an informed decision. For further advice or to discuss your investment strategy, feel free to contact me at kirsty@kdcommercial.co.uk. I'm here to help you survive, thrive, and make your next big move into commercial property.

A FREE GUIDE

5 REASONS TO CONSIDER COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

SCAN THE QR CODE

or visit www.kd-commercial.co.uk/5-reasons

SHINING HONESTY ON PROPERTY

OUR TOP 5 PROPERTY MYTHS BUSTED

Ruth & Rebecca
The Honest Property Sisters

The property industry is full of people giving advice, whether on social media platforms or at events. While some of this advice is helpful, much of it can either be outdated, or wildly inaccurate.

It becomes easy to get caught up in unsolicited advice from well-meaning people. This is especially true when you first start investing in property, and your family and friends are passing on their property knowledge from Bob down the pub (who doesn't invest and listens to uninspiring news).

Too much information can lead to analysis paralysis. On the other hand, the wrong information can lead to money being lost and the wrong deals being invested in. In this article, we want to go some of the way to ending this misinformation by busting five of the most common myths in the property industry.

A Quick Intro

We're sisters, Ruth and Rebecca (AKA The Honest Property Sisters). We also host the Honest Proper-tea podcast where we have honest conversations about property investing, entrepreneurship and holistic business, by removing all the fluff.

We've been business partners and investors together for 12+ years, starting as fresh-faced 20-year-olds, with a passion for business, building a multimillion-pound portfolio, with experience in houses in multiple occupation (HMO), buy-to-let (BTL), serviced accommodation (SA) and rent-to-rent (R2R), all whilst studying at university.

Tired of the glamorised version of what it looked like to be an investor, we decided to break the mould to show that wealth and success look different to everyone. So, when we break down these five myths, they're coming from our own experience!

Myth 1: You Need a Big Budget to Get Started.

People think property investing is only for those with high-income jobs or big savings, but this is simply not true. There are investment strategies that allow you to start small and scale up.

Many successful investors often start their property journey as accidental landlords or by using creative strategies, such as purchasing with a low-deposit mortgage. Shared ownership joint ventures are another option, allowing you to share the asset with another investor. Some people leverage equity from existing assets, like their own home, to get started.

For those with less capital, lease options are a particularly popular strategy — essentially allowing you to 'buy a property for a pound.' Of course, it's more nuanced than that, but you get the idea.

We were university students with little money when we first started. After pitching to multiple potential angel investors, we realised we had a family friend who already knew, liked, and trusted us. They were happy to invest in us for a fixed return, giving us the boost we needed to begin our journey. We then recycled that same pot of money to continue building our portfolio.

It's easy to get stuck in inaction, thinking you need to aim for commercial HMOs or aparthotels right from the start. However, starting small with your first investment is often a smarter and less risky approach. It provides invaluable learning experiences, much like beginning with index funds in stocks and shares before moving on to riskier day trading.

First, you must move small rocks before big mountains!

Myth 2: You Need to Be an Expert to Get Started.

This isn't true. Many investors learn as they go and make sure they equip themselves with multiple resources, like property communities, mentors, and online property education.

While we agree that having foundational knowledge should be the baseline before investing in property, many accidental landlords have had to learn on the fly, gaining experience as they go.

Typically, learning looks like a weekend course or doing a self-paced one online in the comfort of your own home (a great resource for continued learning on good landlording is the NRLA).

You can also have 'course junkies' who do endless courses and never buy one single property because they feel the need to acquire every bit of knowledge, so they never start.

Don't wait until you know everything, because you never will, just STOP being a perfectionist! Starting small and taking calculated risks whilst surrounding yourself with other experienced investors along the way is how you'll grow.

Myth 3: Property Income is Passive Income

Property investing requires no effort after you make your first purchase... Let us just spit out our matcha tea... When we first started our journey in property we were told we would retire at 30 sipping cocktails on the beach living the Vida Loca. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

This couldn't be further from the truth. If anyone tells you that property investing is fully passive, then run don't walk.

How naive we were at 20 when we got the keys to our first projects. We soon learned that the truth is, managing properties takes time and effort, whether it's dealing with your tenants, maintenance, or regulation changes.

It becomes more "hands-off" only with outsourcing management to letting agencies or building great systems, software and boundaries. However, this only comes when you have more experience in the game.

When we first started investing, we were fully hands-on wanting to learn the ins and outs of how everything works. But there comes a moment when you have too many properties to manage alone, and must start looking for management solutions, if you value your time.

There are so many more software management options now than there were 12 years ago when we first started. While property investing isn't 100% passive, it can be much less time-intensive than a traditional job or business.

The key is setting up the right systems and processes. Once you do, property can generate recurring income while you sleep and help build long-term wealth. It's not effortless, but the initial hard work is worth it.

Myth 4: Buy-to-let Is No Longer Profitable.

Headlines often claim that high taxes and stricter regulations have killed the profitability of BTL properties. While there is an element of truth in lower profits than other strategies, BTL investing is still thriving and remains a great option for those seeking location freedom (like us) or a simpler investment strategy.

Many other investors who value stability prefer BTL because it offers predictable, steady cash flow, and in our opinion, a safer way to start investing with less risk. Unlike more hands-on strategies such as flipping or HMOs, a well-managed buy-to-let can align with a low-maintenance lifestyle.

The difference now is that if you want to have a thriving BTL strategy, you'll need to be treating it like a proper business like using a limited company to run operations and/or invest with. Gone are the days of the novice landlord.

We personally started with HMOs before moving on to invest in SAs, as our goal in our early 20s was to have the highest cash flowing properties, so we could enjoy a life of travel and adventure.

Now in our 30s, our goals look different, and we choose to focus on simple BTLs, which are less intensive to manage.

We closed our SA business because we remembered that wealth for us is getting time back with the people we love. We prefer travel adventures and exploring the world over expensive cars and fancy handbags, but everyone's idea of wealth looks different.

Buy-to-let isn't "dead." It's evolving, and for investors prioritising freedom or simplicity remains a smart and reliable option, plus it's the OG property strategy, it's truly timeless.

Myth 5: You Can Rush into a Joint Venture (JV) Partnership

Joint ventures (JVs) can accelerate your success when done right. For example, you might lack capital but have time, while a partner has capital but limited availability. However, rushing into a JV can lead to misaligned goals, disputes, or financial strain.

Early in our journey, we gave control of our rent-to-rent portfolio to a partner who overpromised and underdelivered. This led to the end of the partnership, loose ends, and significant financial costs. The lesson? Take your time to build trust and test compatibility before committing to a JV.

Treat partnerships like a business marriage. Use clear contracts, document everything in writing, and ensure your goals align.

A handful of trustworthy partners is better than rushing into multiple partnerships with the wrong people. Work with people who have walked the walk and not just talk rubbish, your gut never lies.

What are The Honest Takeaways from the Myths We've Uncovered?

- You don't need a huge budget or years of experience to get started because there are always creative ways to get around this.
- Property investing isn't truly passive, but it does offer a pathway to build freedom over time with the right systems and support in place. It does take some hard work in the beginning to get there, if it were easy everyone would be doing it.
- You don't need to follow property trends or copy others. Focus on the strategies that align with your goals and lifestyle, and only take advice from people who have already walked that path.
- The honest truth is that your biggest blocks are all in your head, so don't let your lack of belief hold you back from starting. Knowledge isn't power; applied knowledge is. Get your foundational knowledge first to build your confidence when making decisions, build a trusted network, and take action, even if it feels small. Every decision compounds.
- Investing is extremely personal because we all have different goals and aspirations. Beyond building wealth, property investment is a tool to help you create an extraordinary life that you love. Remember that wealth looks different for everyone, and if property investing is part of your dream, don't let anyone hold you back.

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Honest Proper-Tea Podcast

Honest Proper-Tea Podcast

LESSONS FROM OUR FIRST YEAR IN PROPERTY

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FOR NEW INVESTORS

James & Victoria McCulloch

Property investors

It was December 2023, and like many others starting out in property, Victoria and I found ourselves working straight through another Christmas. Victoria had minimal holiday allowance in her marketing role in the finance sector, and I was taking advantage of the lucrative option of contracted hours in my role as an engineering consultant. By the end of the festive season, we were exhausted, with little rest and not much to show for it.

That's when the thought hit us: *"There must be more to life than this."* And the rest, as they say, is history.

In January 2024, we discovered the world of property and embarked on a journey that we hope would allow us to leave our corporate nine-to-five roles for good. It hasn't all been smooth sailing — there have been ups and downs, successes and frustrations — but our first 12 months in property have been incredibly rewarding. We've found a new passion, and the future looks bright!

Here's what we've learned during our first year and how we hope it can help you if you're thinking of taking the leap into property.

Step One: Invest in (THE RIGHT) Training and Mentorship

When we decided to go 'all in' on our property venture, we already had an existing buy-to-let (BTL) portfolio. However, we quickly discovered that buying more BTLs was neither the quickest nor highest cash-flowing option for us.

However, due to a lack of knowledge, we didn't know any other path to take. Recognising this, and understanding that training and education would be fundamental to our success, we started researching education providers. We knew the risks of picking the wrong trainer, so we did extensive research. That's when we came across Hayley Andrews from *Your Freedom Empire* (YFE) and applied for a 1-1 mentorship with her. Hayley is fantastic, so we were thrilled to pass the interview stage and assign her as our mentor.

Interior shots from James and Victoria's projects

We attended three days of invaluable and tailored one-to-one training at YFE's office, which gave us the direction we needed, helping us to pick a strategy that will allow us to leave our jobs behind. Hayley also reviews all our deals, which gave us confidence knowing we had an experienced extra set of eyes.

Biggest Challenges and Hurdles

Know your strategy – and stick to it – When your eyes are opened to the world of property, the possibilities are endless. HMOs, serviced accommodation, commercial to resi, social housing... the list goes on. In short, it's easy to get 'shiny penny' syndrome.

Thankfully, we've stayed consistent and in 'our lane'. We've focused on the strategy we planned with Hayley, which was rent-to-rent (R2R) and serviced accommodation (SA). This strategy has helped us build monthly cash flow, which in turn will replace our current salaries, allowing us to securely leave our full-time roles.

Do your research and due diligence – The biggest challenge for us at the start was finding which location to invest in. We ran due diligence on an area, monitoring it over time, only to find it wouldn't work for SA. Rather than seeing this as a failure or a setback, we saw this as a positive — it was only helping us narrow down our area further.

This experience taught us patience, not to rush into deals, and that market research is key. It may have taken us a while to find our area, but once we did, it really paid off for us. On our first SA deal, we received a one-month booking prior to it even hitting the market!

Be prepared for a lot of no's – R2R is a great strategy, but one we've found a lot of letting agents and landlords don't quite understand, despite the huge benefits for both of them. We've worked hard to build relationships with local letting agents and our landlords, so they get to know who we are and how we operate.

This is starting to pay off and we're now receiving referrals from our landlords, and most recently a lettings agent recommended us directly to a friend looking for a hands-off approach — which we've now added to our portfolio. The key is persistence and knowing your strategy. By being the expert in our field, we can explain what we do confidently. We want to be the first name a letting agent thinks of when an opportunity passes them. It's all about being persistent, and not stopping despite how many 'no's' we receive on an almost daily basis.

Keep networking – Networking has been a priority for us from the start, and something we're incredibly thankful we started when we did. We've built genuine relationships in the property industry, and it's created multiple opportunities.

To demonstrate our commitment and dedication to staying informed within the industry, between us, we attend the *Blue Bricks Magazine* events, and other independent meetings, like the *Newcastle Property & Poppadoms events and The Property Thing in* Darlington*.* Victoria also attends the female property networking group, *Hard Hats to Heels*. It's fair to say we've covered some miles in our first year, and some weeks we have been passing ships in the night, but the value we've received from each event has been worth it.

What's the Plan Going Forward?

We now have a successful R2R/SA business, which we plan to grow. As we've scaled in recent months, we've been working with investors to fund the set-up of the properties, working on a 12% return on investment for them.

We want to continue scaling our R2R business, as well as adding to our BTL portfolio. Going forward, we will buy single lets in the same area we are looking for/already have SA. This way, we have multiple options in terms of cash flow and can utilise our market research.

Alongside this, we also keep a close eye on the market for potential flip opportunities. This will allow us to recycle our funds and keep scaling our business.

Get in Touch

If anyone would like to know more about what we do, visit any of our properties, or connect with us, please get in touch.

We're keen to build our relationships and our network, learn from others, or potentially even work together in the future — it all starts with a phone call or a coffee.

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RomaFLOW
RomaGROW
RomaPRO

ROMA FINANCE:

INTRODUCES NEW BUY-TO-LET PRODUCT TO EMPOWER PROPERTY INVESTORS

Michael Allison
Commercial Director at Roma Finance

Specialist property lender, *Roma Finance*, has taken a significant step in extending its support of property investors with the launch of *RomaPRO*, an innovative buy-to-let product designed to streamline financing options for those looking to build and expand their property portfolios. This new offering is part of a strategic product update for *Roma*, which is aimed at making property investment more accessible and efficient for customers.

Unlocking New Investment Opportunities

RomaPRO is specifically designed for investors using Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), offering loans ranging from £75,000 to £2 million. Whether you're purchasing a new property, transitioning from development projects, or seeking long-term buy-to-let financing, *RomaPRO* provides a seamless solution tailored to your investment needs.

The product can be used alongside *Roma's* bridging and development finance solutions or as a standalone buy-to-let option, offering customers the flexibility to shape their property journey in the most efficient way.

Designed for Property Investors

Property investment can be complex, but *RomaPRO* aims to simplify the process by providing a comprehensive solution that covers every stage of the investment lifecycle. Whether you are acquiring new properties, refinancing existing assets, or scaling your portfolio, *RomaPRO* ensures that you have the financial backing to achieve your goals with confidence.

Michael Allison, Commercial Director at *Roma Finance*, emphasises the benefits of this new product: *"The introduction of RomaPRO is a game-changer for people investing in property. We recognise that our customers need flexible and competitive financing solutions that align with their long-term investment strategies. RomaPRO delivers just that, empowering you to take control of your portfolio with confidence."*

Simplifying Your Investment Journey: FLOW | GROW | PRO

To further support the property investment market, *Roma Finance* has restructured its product offerings into three distinct ranges — **FLOW**, **GROW**, and **PRO** — making it easier to navigate their specialist lending solutions:

RomaFLOW: Designed for those who need quick access to capital, *RomaFLOW* offers fast and reliable bridging finance, with 80% of cases completing within 28 days. Whether you need to act swiftly on a new opportunity or release equity from an existing property, *RomaFLOW* provides a dependable solution.

RomaGROW: Focused on development finance, *RomaGROW* supports customers looking to fund construction, refurbishment, and growth projects. Whether you're building from scratch or upgrading existing properties, this range offers the flexibility and financial strength to bring your vision to life.

RomaPRO: The newly launched buy-to-let range is ideal for refinancing, purchasing, or transitioning from development projects to long-term property holdings. Key features include:

- Competitive, variable buy-to-let rates linked to the *Bank of England* base rate
- Top-slicing options to maximize borrowing capacity while ensuring affordability
- Suitability for a wide range of property types, including HMOs, multi-unit blocks, holiday lets, and serviced accommodation

A Commitment to Investor Success

Roma Finance's commitment to innovation and customer support is at the heart of the new product suite. The streamlined **FLOW | GROW | PRO** framework simplifies the borrowing process, helping investors secure the right funding solutions with clarity and efficiency.

Looking ahead, *Roma Finance* plans to introduce additional products throughout 2025, to further enhance its support for property entrepreneurs. As Allison adds, *"This isn't just about launching new products — it's about creating lasting value for our customers and helping them achieve long-term success and prosperity through property ownership."*

Your Trusted Lending Partner

In today's dynamic property market, having the right financial partner is crucial. *Roma Finance* is dedicated to supporting customers with tailored solutions that offer flexibility, speed, and reliability. Whether you're expanding your portfolio or securing long-term rental income, *RomaPRO* and the broader **FLOW | GROW | PRO** suite provides the tools you need to succeed.

For more information about *RomaPRO* and how it can support your investment goals, visit **www.romafinance.co.uk.**

INTRODUCING OUR ACCOUNTANCY PARTNER EQUATAS ACCOUNTANTS

Richard Forth
Director of Equatas Accountants

The property market is ever-evolving. As a result, professional landlords and developers face a myriad of financial challenges, from tax compliance and planning to strategic portfolio management.

Whether you own a handful of properties or oversee a multi-million-pound portfolio, navigating the complex financial terrain requires expertise and support tailored to your objectives and goals.

Equatas Accountants are delighted to join the *Blue Bricks Community* as specialist tax advisors and accountants for landlords and property investors to help their members manoeuvre around this complex terrain.

Expertise Rooted in the Property Sector

In the coming issues of *Blue Bricks Magazine*, we will be deep-diving into various elements of taxation and regulation to help you manage your finances effectively. But, since this is our first time writing for the publication, we wanted to firstly do a quick introduction to who we are and how we help.

Equatas is a team of seasoned tax advisers and accountants with years of experience assisting clients in the property sector. Tax can be the Achilles' heel for many property and business owners, with rules often changing.

For example, in the recent *Autumn Budget*, it was announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves that *Stamp Duty Land Tax* (the tax applied to purchasing a property) will increase from 3% to 5%, applicable to anyone purchasing an additional property (beyond their main dwelling).

This, of course, will impact many property landlords looking to grow their portfolio. The team understands the nuances of buy-to-let taxation, property portfolio structuring, and compliance with the latest legislative changes.

This knowledge means we can assist in managing rental income and expenses, as well as advising on tax-efficient structures, ensuring that you are always ahead of the curve.

Many landlords struggle with changing tax rules and regulatory requirements, which can eat into profits and create unnecessary stress.

Our mission is simple: to provide landlords and investors with clear, strategic advice that saves money and optimises their investment returns.

Supporting Your Objectives

Whatever your business objectives, there is a wide range of support and guidance we can provide.

- Incorporating your property business & Incorporation Advice
- Managing Capital Gains Tax on property sales
- Bringing back taxes up to date
- Abolishment of the Furnished Holiday Let tax regime
- VAT on commercial properties
- Making Tax Digital for Income Tax
- Inheritance Tax

Strategic Financial Planning for Portfolio Growth

Beyond tax advice, we take a holistic approach to advising clients. For landlords and developers with ambitious growth plans, the team offers in-depth cash flow analysis, financing advice, and guidance on scaling operations sustainably.

Services also include bespoke reports that help you assess portfolio performance, forecast returns, and identify opportunities for diversification.

By leveraging modern accounting tools and software, we provide landlords and developers with real-time financial insights. As clients, you will benefit from cloud-based systems, ensuring easy access to key financial data anytime, anywhere.

Compliance Without the Hassle

Staying compliant with ever-changing regulations is a top priority for landlords and developers. From the abolishment of the Furnished Holiday Let tax regime to *Making Tax Digital* (MTD) for income tax, we will assist you in remaining up-to-date and penalty-free.

The team also advises on managing VAT for commercial properties and navigating complex property ownership structures.

A Partner You Can Trust

What sets us apart is our dedication to building long-term partnerships with clients. Our focus is on delivering value year after year. We are more than tax specialists and accountants.

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WILDKIND INTERIORS

WHY YOU NEED TO AVOID 'INTERIOR DESIGN TRENDS' IN 2025

Louise Wynne
Owner of Wildkind Interiors

OK, so I'm being a little bit naughty here. The only trend you really need to follow is designing for your buyers, tenants, or guests.

Actual design trends? Most of them can go in the bin. They're rarely sustainable — for your budget or the environment.

The best, the right, and the proper way to do it is to create a design that has longevity (I've always loved the sound of that word, and I love its meaning too) and that looks great in 5, hell, even 10 years' time.

Before you roll your eyes, let me reassure you — this doesn't mean your interiors need to be:

A. Boring
B. Expensive
C. Bland

So, let's dig into my 5 anti-trends — the ones that will make your money work harder and ensure your designs stand the test of time.

1. Hooray! Goodbye to Grey

Interior designers have been ditching grey for years, and finally, developers are catching on. Pure grey (we're talking about the shade made from black and white only) offers no positive psychological benefits. None. Zero. Nada.

So, please bear this in mind next time you specify grey in your interiors. You can bet your bottom dollar that, had you hired a designer, they'd not be doing the same.

Choose a 'taupe' colour instead (basically a warm brown/grey), such as *Little Greene's* French Grey, or a warm neutral colour, such as *Coat Paint's* 'Biscuit Beige.' You need to create a warm, inviting space when potential buyers (guests or tenants) enter your property, and these colours will achieve that. Pure grey just doesn't have it in it. Literally!

2. Mixing Metals Like a Pro

I have to admit, this one can be pretty tricky to pull off, but the more modern interiors don't focus on just one metal; they focus on a mix. Why? Think of metals as a great opportunity to add colour and texture for interest, just as you might do with furniture or soft furnishings.

Here's the secret:

- Choose one dominant metal and use it throughout.
- Add one or two complementary metals for variety.
- Avoid more than three finishes in the same space.

There's a little more to it than that (consider your entire design colour palette when considering what metals work best), but in a nutshell, if you follow this advice, you won't go far wrong, and you'll have a scheme with interest and personality.

3. Kitchens That Stand the Test of Time

Years ago, someone said to me that if you need a new kitchen, rule Numero Uno is... Don't do what everyone else is doing because that means you're following a trend, and that means, in a few short years, your dream kitchen is going to feel a bit like that spiralizer that's languishing in the back of your cupboard.

Seemed like a great idea at the time, but in reality, you were living someone else's dream.

Right now, navy and green kitchens are everywhere. While they're lovely, they're fast becoming overdone. My advice? Add warmth by pairing bold colours with wood or wood-effect finishes. This combo creates a timeless look that still feels unique — perfect for standing out in a crowded market.

Simple but effective, and it ties in very nicely with my final trend at number 5.

4. Wall Panelling: Proceed with Caution

Wall panelling is still popular, but not all styles have staying power. Wood slat panelling? I'd avoid it — it's likely to feel dated in just a couple of years.

What does work beautifully, and has guaranteed longevity, though, is a more classic, Victorian-esque style of wall panelling. Generally speaking, I'd say paint it the same colour as the walls, but hell, you could even go mad and paint the moulding itself in a suitable feature colour, like giant artwork frames.

Choose a contrast or a few tones darker than the colour on the walls, and I guarantee it'll stand out as being different from what others are doing. I found this article interesting, and they're singing from the same hymn sheet when it comes to trends. And remember, if you're different, you don't date!

5. Embracing Biophilic Design

We're humans. We evolved in nature. Green is the colour that takes the least adjustment for our eyes to process.

Biophilic design — bringing natural elements into interiors — isn't just a trend. It's a philosophy that's here to stay.

Here's how to incorporate it:

- Use natural materials like wood, stone, and light-coloured carpets.
- Maximise natural light and opt for green palettes.
- Balance geometric shapes with organic forms like curves and waves.
- Layer textures, upcycle furniture, and embrace surfaces that age gracefully, like leather.

Biophilic design creates spaces that feel healthier, more productive, and deeply inviting — not just for now, but for years to come.

Why Anti-Trends Matter

Ditching trends might seem counterintuitive, but it's the smartest move for your development, your profit, and the environment.

Instead of following the crowd, focus on your target market — design with their needs in mind — not what your competitors are doing.

Ready to Create Interiors with Longevity?

At WildKind Interiors, we specialise in designs that maximise value while standing the test of time. If you're ready to create spaces that feel fresh, functional, and future-proof, let's chat!

CONTACT DETAILS

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louise@wildkindinteriors.co.uk

INTRODUCING OUR FURNITURE PARTNER

LANDLORD FURNITURE CO

A few of the team at Landlord Furniture Co

In 2016, landlord Dale Wild had finally had enough of wasting time and money on poor-quality, flat-packed furniture that was simply not fit for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) tenants. He needed a better solution: sturdy furniture, built to last, all while still being appealing and stylish.

So, utilising contacts he made while running a successful sofa company, Dale got to work, and *Landlord Furniture Co* was born!

How Do We Help?

We specialise in providing a bespoke, tailored service for clients across all sectors, including HMOs, serviced accommodation (SA), and student housing. Whether you're an experienced landlord or taking your first steps, we're here to help. Beyond making furniture buying effortless, we offer a free consultation service, providing recommendations on paint colours, furniture placement, and even creating mood boards to help you visualise how everything will come together.

Create any aesthetic with *Landlord Furniture Co*

All our furniture is made to order (taking around 5-10 days) from 18mm material, no hardboard and built to kitchen cabinet specifications.

Bespoke Furniture Made to Fit Your Properties

As the furniture is made by us and made to order (90% of our furniture is made within a 50-mile radius of our HQ in Oldham), we really can do anything you need. If you want to make the most of high ceilings, we can make your wardrobes taller.

Want furniture to fit perfectly into an alcove? No problem. Have a very specific 'look' in mind but can't quite find the right thing on our website? We have unlimited colour options and invite you to create your very own range.

Sofas are also made in-house and can be made to any dimensions, from any fabric, and in any colour. The options are endless.

Your orders will be delivered and installed by one of our professional and friendly in-house delivery teams.

We strongly believe that we offer the best quality furniture on the market, and we pride ourselves on our customer service. Don't believe us? See what our clients have to say.

Our Reviews:

Danielle, January 2025
"First time using Landlord Furniture Co, really happy with the service. The beds and mattresses appear to be very good quality. Special mention to Stewart and Joey who delivered and installed the furniture - they were efficient, very friendly, and a credit to the company. Would recommend without reservation."

Ray, December 2024
"We are a frequent customer and have ordered many times over the years. Thanks for the continued excellence in not only the furniture that you offer but also the service."

In 2024 We:

- Delivered 3451 beds
- Made 630 sofas
- Made 7399 pieces of furniture
- Travelled 125,000 miles (that's 5 times around the world)

We see our responsibility to participate in sustainable development, not only as a duty to society but as an opportunity to do well by doing good.

All waste from every delivery is removed and recycled, and suppliers are ensured not to use wood from national parks or conservation areas. Twice per year, furniture is donated to the local hospice, Dr Kershaw's, and workplace experience opportunities are offered to local schools.

For the past nine years, we have gone from strength to strength, celebrating a record year in 2024. We are so excited to be sponsoring *Blue Bricks Magazine* in 2025 and building winning relationships with the *Blue Bricks Community*. To kickstart the partnership, **we are offering Blue Bricks members 5% off their first order over £3,000 + VAT with code BB5.**

Landlord Furniture Co lets you be creative with your interiors

CONTACT US

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LANDLORD FURNITURE CO

USING VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS IN MY PROPERTY BUSINESS

THE TOP 3 THINGS I WISH I KNEW BEFORE BUILDING MY TEAM

Lukasz Rybak
Founder of propVA

Working with virtual assistants (VAs) is increasingly popular for their flexibility and cost savings. But how do you find the right person? What common pitfalls should you avoid? And is the value for money truly as good as it seems?

These are just a few of the questions I get asked by my clients every week.

In this article, I'll answer these questions by sharing my story of building a team of six virtual assistants in the Philippines. Unfortunately, it wasn't smooth sailing, and I made my fair share of mistakes along the way. If you're debating outsourcing tasks like deal analysis or scrolling through *Rightmove*, I hope learning from my story will help you avoid costly and time-consuming mistakes.

Outsourcing My Property Business: How I Started

After 15 years in the corporate world, I launched my prop-tech startup, *Aquila Connect*, in 2022. This venture allowed me to fully immerse myself in the property industry.

However, I soon learned that starting and building a business was one thing, but growing and maintaining operations on a budget was another challenge entirely.

The two biggest hurdles I faced were a lack of expertise in certain areas and time. The struggle is to work on the business rather than in it. Outsourcing admin tasks when you're on a shoestring budget and have no team is extremely difficult.

AI tools and third-party companies can help, but AI takes time to master, and third parties are expensive. Eventually, I stumbled upon Filipino virtual assistants. The time difference worked for me, English is their official language, and their easy-going mentality was a blessing.

Even though I built my dream team, the journey wasn't without lessons.

Mistake 1: Not All That Glitters Is Gold

For my first assistant, I sought someone proactive, intelligent, and versatile. I wasn't too concerned about formal education or specific skills, as I was willing to share my knowledge and provide on-the-job training. Eventually, I recruited a very promising 25-year-old for a full-time role. He was enthusiastic, well-prepared for the interview, and eager to work hard and grow with the company.

However, within the first two weeks, his enthusiasm and performance began to decline. This was followed by a few unnotified absences, which ultimately led to his swift departure from my business.

LESSON LEARNED: If I had asked more specific and targeted questions during the interview, I might have made a different choice. This was the first and last time I hired someone without actual specialisation.

Mistake 2: Know Your Process

My initial recruitment efforts were slow. Despite having interview experience from my corporate career, it took time to establish and streamline a process for hiring VAs.

In the beginning, I allowed candidates to book interviews at any time during my working day. This caused havoc in my calendar for the whole week and sometimes blocked me from going out when I needed to. Additionally, I didn't always take enough notes or assign scores and comments immediately after interviews. You'd be surprised how quickly information mixes in your head when you've just had five interviews in one day.

LESSON LEARNED: I needed a process. I stopped taking notes by hand and started typing them into a previously prepared template. For each job post, I created an individual template with specific, relevant questions. If I didn't manage to take all the answers, I always left my comments right at the bottom. I also wrote how I felt about the candidate. Ultimately, how you get on with someone is just as important as their qualifications. Finally, I limited the time I made available for interviews to just three hours per day, in one block.

Mistake 3: Horses for Courses

My initial approach was: I would have someone who would do all the tedious, time-consuming tasks, cover my social media, do some deal analysis — and in the meantime — make a few phone calls. I was supposed to train this person, lead, help, and build the relationship. However, things didn't quite work out as I had expected. Although my new assistant was quite good at creative tasks, like social media or website design, it took him longer to write engaging content. He didn't enjoy making phone calls, and analysing numbers wasn't his thing at all.

LESSON LEARNED: I very quickly understood that not everyone has an entrepreneurial mindset, and my sheer passion, drive, and motivation will only take my team so far.

Although this situation was fairly easy to rectify, it was crucial for my business. I built my team on strengths. Now, I match skills and personalities to tasks. That's how I finally completed my team: a mixture of part-time and full-time specialists in their fields. One person does creative tasks, another analytical. There is a customer-facing role for extroverted employees, and a CRM and data entry one for introverted personality types.

My Final Thoughts

Building my own team was a time-consuming and challenging experience, but I wouldn't have it any other way. For a fraction of the UK cost, I benefit from a team of motivated, intelligent, and committed people who helped me reclaim my time and focus on other projects.

Taking my experience, and the way I have built such a brilliant team, I have founded *ropVA* to help other property professionals outsource those menial tasks and focus on the growth of their portfolios. By learning from my mistakes, you can instantly have a 'power team' that wins you back your freedom and removes the pain of doing every task yourself.

For more information, view my website below, or contact me directly.

CONTACT ME

www.propVA.co.uk **info@propva.co.uk** **Lukasz Rybak**

Double Your Returns: Dive into Title Split Success

A Property Developer's Guide for 60% Cash Flow Increase

Experience 4x growth with multiple properties and multiple cash flows from every deal you do. Title Split is the strategy of 2024.

titlesplit.com

With our guidance, achieve a 25-35% capital uplift, ensure mixed assets for stability and master MIMO on every deal.

- Do you want both cash flow and equity growth in your portfolio?
- Want to diversify your portfolio, secure your future and maximise returns?
- Are you looking to turbocharge your cash flow in today's market?

SCAN ME

Access the FREE Title Split Video for Blue Brick readers. Discover ideal properties & achieve maximum cash flow and equity uplift. Scan the QR code to download.

Rachel Knight, our dynamic Property Developer since 2005 & Title Splitting expert, leads a Power Team of experts **dedicated to helping you maximise your returns with Title Split.**

UNVEILING THE TRUTH ABOUT TITLE SPLITTING

THE MYTHS CAUSING INVESTORS TO LEAVE 25%-35% PROFIT IN UNSPLIT BLOCKS

Rachel Knight
Founder of TitleSplit.com

When I started in property back in 2005, I never imagined the journey would lead me here — helping investors unlock untapped potential in their portfolios with Title Splitting. It's a strategy that's been around for centuries but is still underutilised by so many landlords today. Why? Myths and misconceptions about Title Splitting cause investors to leave 25%-35% profit on the table, trapped in unsplit blocks.

In this article, I'll share how I went from being a determined single mum to building a thriving property portfolio and founding TitleSplit.com. Along the way, I'll dispel those myths, explain what Title Splitting is, and show how it can transform your approach to investing in Multi-Unit Freehold Blocks (MUFBs). Let's dive in!

One of Life's Defining Moments

My property journey began in 2005, but I'd say one of the defining moments that led me to invest in property, build my business, and earn the title of 'Title Split Queen' came much earlier.

In life, we all have moments that shape us. For me, that moment happened when I was just 16, pregnant, and sitting at the front of a bus. The girls from school, sitting at the back, were talking about me, saying I would fail in life because I was having a baby. They thought I would become a benefits claimant and live off the state.

Those hurtful comments, the equivalent of modern-day trolling, gave me an inner strength I never knew I had. At that moment, I thought, "I will show you!" Overhearing that conversation ignited a drive within me that no matter what people said, I would support my family, build my career, and make a success of my life.

By the time I was 17, a single parent, I was determined to build a career and support my children on my own. So, when my daughter was just three months old, I went back to work at the *Post Office* and kept developing my career. Family is everything to me, and 10 years later, I had my second daughter (though no pictures of them here — they'd kill me!). Now, 40 years later, with two beautiful daughters and three amazing grandchildren, I still remember that defining moment on the bus. I consider myself fortunate to have recognized it as the event that sparked the drive and determination I carry with me today.

When was your defining moment? We all have them, if we think deeply enough!

From Corporate Career to Full-Time Property Investor

I started my career in sales at 19, and by 22, I was a Training Manager for one of *The Times* Top 100 training companies in the UK (we were 49th). I loved that job, but it was a stepping stone to a Sales Manager role, so I had to leave it behind and move upwards.

During this time, I set myself the goal of running my own training and development company by my 50s, which would be my dream job as I approached retirement in my 60s. Over the next 25 years, I climbed the corporate ladder, earning a six-figure income and supporting my kids. Eventually, the workplace politics became too much, and I wanted out.

I began my property journey in 2005 as an amateur buy-to-let (BTL) investor, using my annual bonus as a deposit to collect properties. I thought this would be a great way to build our pension. In 2015, I decided to get educated to learn how to do things properly. This education was a great investment, and within three years, my partner, Andy, and I had enough income from property to walk away from our corporate jobs (thank goodness). That day you walk away from your job to continue building your future with property and investment income is a defining moment.

We also discovered the power of having a Small Self-Administered Scheme (SSAS) pension, which has been the icing on the cake for our future. We started title-splitting blocks in 2017 and realised this was a brilliant way to build a single-let portfolio, increase our cash flow, and, most importantly, grow our portfolio in line with UK capital growth. We currently hold a portfolio of BTL properties and are collecting commercial properties in our SSAS for cash flow in the future. A few of our properties are pictured in this article.

What is an Unsplit Block?

An unsplit block, also known as a Multi-Unit Freehold Block (MUFB), consists of multiple apartments within a single building, all of which are rented out by landlords. However, these apartments are registered on the Land Registry under one freehold title. Banks refer to these as MUFBs, and they are typically mortgaged in the same way as large houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

Unlike large HMOs, where individual rooms cannot be sold separately, MUFBs can be subdivided, allowing the individual apartments to be sold, financed separately, or let out as buy-to-let properties, serviced accommodation (SA), or small HMOs. As these units can be sold individually to retail buyers, they often hold more value as separate units than as part of a single block.

Often, the block can only be sold to another landlord or developer. In many cases, landlords who plan to split the block before selling find it difficult to do so, as their lender may not permit the reduction of the mortgage security by selling one flat at a time.

As a result, the landlord is forced to sell the entire block as an MUFB, typically at a lower price (block value). If you've ever purchased an MUFB at what seemed like a bargain price, this is likely the reason why.

Title Splitting: Not a New Concept

Title Splitting is far from a new concept; it has been around for hundreds of years. Traditionally, it has been used when developers sell properties off-plan or as newly built blocks. Solicitors are generally only ever asked to do it this way, so this is the way everybody Title Splits.

Rachel outside a local developers half-finished project that went bust near her home

This is the old-fashioned way of Title Splitting and works well only if you are selling everything. You do have to be careful though, as buying a property on an expensive bridging loan and planning to split on sale can be a risky strategy. If there's a market interruption (downturns like the impact of Covid or the Liz Truss government's economic shock), things can quickly take a turn for the worse.

What happens when the bridging loan term expires? How will you manage to exit the project? How will you refinance your property? This is when developers get stuck, projects fail, bridging loans reach their maturity, and investors lose their funds. We've all heard these horror stories.

How Can You Finance Title Split Apartments?

Title Split apartments can be rented out, financed on buy-to-let mortgages at the 'split value', sold to owner buyers, turned into serviced accommodation units, let out as mini-HMOs, etc.

When valuing Title Split apartments, recent sales of comparable properties are often considered, and most importantly, individual apartments in a Title Split block can be financed on:

- **BTL Mortgages:** 1 apartment at a time with one bank or a number of banks. This is the split value.
- **Commercial Loan:** All of the apartments in the block can be mortgaged on one commercial loan, with one bank.
- ***TitleSplit.com* Money Out Process:** See an example below for more details on how this works.

The Title Split Money Out Process

Many property investors assume they don't need to split the block, believing that commercial valuations are better. However, this is a misconception. The truth is, block values DO NOT grow in line with capital growth and often fall in value over time.

Unsplit blocks and large HMOs are typically valued using the same methodology, which takes into account rental income and area-specific commercial yields. The higher the yield in the area, the lower the valuation.

When an HMO is newly refurbished, finished to a high standard, fully tenanted, and positively cash-flowing, its commercial valuation will be at its highest. Five or ten years later, however, if that property has aged and is no longer achieving top-of-the-market rents, the valuation often drops. An oversupply of stock in the area can also lead to vacancies, further decreasing its value. Landlords may refer to this as a "down value," but in reality, it's simply the true market value. This is why you can often find older HMOs or unsplit blocks available at much lower prices.

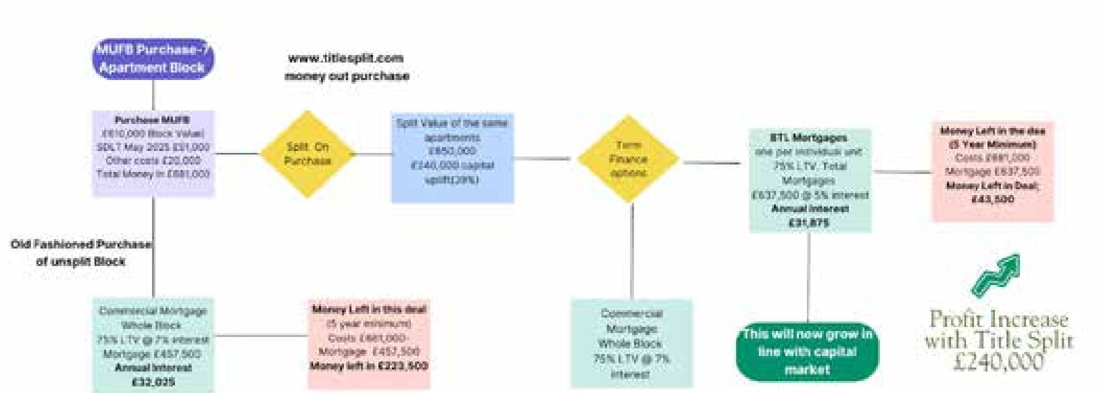
When a block is Title Split immediately upon purchase, it can be valued as individual, saleable retail properties. The Title Split Money Out Process highlights the advantages of this approach. Take, for example, the purchase of a £610,000 apartment block with seven flats in the north of England — where the purchasing landlord knew exactly how to execute this strategy. If the block is split at the point of purchase, the value increases substantially. Left unsplit, the value remains at £610,000, based on rental yield and income. However, by splitting the titles, the investor can unlock an additional £180,000 in value on day one of the deal.

- £240,000 capital uplift gained from the split value in year one of ownership. This is based upon comparable market valuations of locally sold properties.
- £180,000 less of your money left in the deal than if you bought in the old-fashioned way as an unsplit block (on one title).
- Even though you have borrowed £180,000 more, the BTL interest rates are an average of 2% lower, meaning your mortgage payments remain the same.
- Block mortgage (Unsplit valuation): you would borrow £457,500 at 7% = £32,025 of interest payments per annum.
- Individual buy-to-let mortgages on seven apartments: you would borrow £637,500 at 5% = £31,875 per annum. So, the mortgage would be less due to the interest rate savings available on BTL finance.
- Your Title Split Apartments will now grow in line with UK capital growth.
- £240,000 profit increase by Title Splitting on purchase.

Why Doesn't Everyone Take This Approach?

Seeing the figures above, you might wonder why every investor buying a block does not Title Split on purchase. After all, who wouldn't want to access this capital uplift on day one? However, surprisingly, very few BTL investors actually Title Split their blocks. Most hold onto them as one freehold until they eventually sell at a loss (the block value).

TitleSplit.com Money Out Process



Why is this? Well, many landlords don't realise how valuable Title Splitting can be (as per the above example), and also they struggle to find the right information or power team to make it happen. Many also listen to their mentors and coaches who advise splitting only when selling. Unfortunately, these mentors and coaches also do not understand this strategy, which perpetuates the cycle.

As a result, there are thousands of these blocks out there, in a dilapidated state, losing value each time they are refinanced. Landlords who own them have been hit hard by interest rate rises and cannot sell these blocks at bricks-and-mortar values. The problem is, you can't achieve the split value unless you've actually Title Split the block into individual, saleable leasehold apartments.

To achieve the split value, landlords need to be able to sell the apartments to individual retail buyers. But to do so, they must evict tenants (which means a hit on rental income) and may even need to take the property onto a high-interest bridging loan in order to sell the apartments over time to retail buyers. This process is too complex for most, so they end up selling the entire block to another investor.

The Solution is Simple:

Title Split on purchase or immediately after purchase. I really wanted to share these amazing processes for Title Splitting with other people, so I am glad to say that I founded *TitleSplit.com* in 2020.

My aim was to train property investors and landlords to get a 25%-35% minimum equity uplift by title-splitting apartment blocks. I am in my 50s, have a BTL and commercial SSAS portfolio, and love every moment of helping my clients make money with my team at *TitleSplit.com.*

We help landlords and developers Title Split blocks, using some unique and creative processes. We work with a small power team of expert professionals (solicitors, brokers, and planners) to ensure our clients win every time. Our processes are unique and help our clients drive equity out of their deals, using the way banks value property to our advantage. We are always aiming for the split value so we can recycle money to do more deals.

What is TitleSplit.com Doing That is Different to the Rest of the Market?

Since 2020, TitleSplit.com has developed robust processes and creative systems to help property investors gain access to the Title Split values early in ownership. We are training solicitors, brokers, and other power team members to understand how to make Title Split deals work, in the best interest of the landlord and developer. We also offer those professionals 22 CPD points for their time spent, so they can count their training towards their professional qualifications.

The Benefits to Property Investors:

Our unique processes enable you to access either commercial or comparable (buy-to-let) valuations right from day one. This gives you the ability to pull your money out of your deal immediately.

We teach investors how to Title Split properties into the ideal structure on the day of purchase. We show people how to Title Split into the perfect structure on the day of purchasing the property. This now means you can keep them all or sell some of the individual apartments at any time. Here are the key benefits of this approach:

- You can access 25%-35% additional capital (uplift Split Value) when you purchase the property.
- You can access better interest rates (around 2% lower for BTL versus commercial).
- The deal is structured with friendly leases, making the individual apartments more attractive for lenders to mortgage.
- Our clients work with clear Creative Title Split processes and a trained power team to enable them to get their money out of the deal early.
- We support you in structuring your deal to optimise tax, profit, cash flow, capital uplift, and capital growth.
- You can take out equity or lower loan-to-values on your Title Split blocks. For example, a 60% LTV rather than a 75% LTV, could again lower your interest rates.

What Should You Do to Prevent Your Block's Value from Stagnating or Declining Over Time?

The answer is simple. Since 2020, we've been educating savvy investors to Title Split on purchase, enabling them to access split values and capital growth from the very beginning of ownership. This is the new approach. Most landlords don't know how to do it, when to do it, or even worry about the cost.

Throughout history, we've seen countless examples of groundbreaking ideas brought to life by visionary entrepreneurs. However, there are many examples of those who don't believe that these new ideas will take hold and go out of their way to prove the entrepreneurs wrong.

The property investment sector, where landlords build portfolios and developers build and flip properties, is no exception.

Whenever a new strategy emerges, there are always detractors shouting that it won't work, that it's unnecessary, or that it's not as innovative as it claims. It's easy to dismiss what you don't understand, but for those seeking significant capital growth in their portfolios, it's essential to block out the noise.

Learn to Title Split blocks as you buy them. As you can see from the numbers here, you really do need to do this to access the capital uplift and lower interest rates in your MUFBs.

My First Title Split: The Power of This Strategy

My first Title Split was in 2017, and as the properties were quite low value (£65,000 for each flat), I knew I needed to finance them initially with a commercial bank. The bank was great, and they listened to what me and my broker had to say. The underwriter did say, though, that I really did not need to Title Split them as they would finance them as a block anyway.

You see, they did not know that in 5 years, I would move them on to individual mortgages for individual flats, based on the split value. The properties were already Title Split in 2017, and so each apartment would now grow in line with UK capital growth.

In 2022, these flats were valued at £90,000 each, reflecting a 38.46% capital growth over 5 years. They are now on BTL mortgages, with interest rates approximately 2% lower than commercial rates. This demonstrates why we, and our clients, choose to Title Split early and decisively — enabling us to access equity and cash flow in our portfolios much sooner.

Join Our FREE Webinar to Learn More

To find out more about Title Splitting blocks, I have included a free 40-minute webinar here. Simply scan the QR code to watch. Alternatively, please visit our website **www.titlesplit.com** or email **info@titlesplit.com** for more information.

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The Yorkshire Law Firm

CROWDPROPERTY
together we build

HOW TO MAKE A DEAL STACK IN 2025

MY TOP 7 TIPS FOR DEVELOPERS

Rupert Lowe
Head of Business Development at CrowdProperty

2025 IS FINALLY HERE AFTER WHAT WAS A CHALLENGING 12 MONTHS FOR PROPERTY INVESTORS AND DEVELOPERS.

This time last year, GDP was flat, inflation was stubbornly sitting at 4%, and the *Bank of England's* base rate had flatlined at 5.25% following two *Monetary Policy Committee* 'hold' votes after 15 consecutive rate increases. And with a General Election looming, the political landscape looked uncertain from both a UK and geopolitical perspective.

The outlook for the UK property market was equally lacklustre. According to widespread industry speculation, house prices were anticipated to fall by an average of 2.7% across a range of credible commentators' forecasts, including the *OBR, Knight Frank, Savills, JLL, Rightmove, Zoopla, and Capital Economics.* This created added uncertainty for developers regarding where — and if — they should build next.

To succeed, developers need to sell their current sites, identify new profitable sites to develop, and have confidence in the market to believe they can crystallise that profit. But, as we all know, these components of the property development cycle have faced challenges — not just in 2024, but for the past few years.

Was 2024 Such a Bad Year?

Believe it or not, no, it wasn't, because much of the property commentary and macro market forecasts didn't actually transpire as anticipated.

Looking back at the *Bank of England's* MPC report in November 2023, 12-month GDP growth through to 2024 was expected to be marginally positive. Meanwhile, Q4 2024 inflation was reportedly anticipated to stand at 3.1%, the base rate at 5%+, and unemployment at 4.5%. But looking at all these measures, the economy is actually in a better position today than originally expected.

Furthermore, the latest property market indices are reporting 12-month growth rates of +4.8% (based on the latest figures published by *Halifax* in November 2024) and +3.7% (Nationwide, November 2024). Interestingly, these results are a long way from the late 2023 forecasts shared by many credible property market commentators.

Property developers need confidence in the stability of house prices to undertake projects, especially under tighter margins. With that confidence, they will build (as long as they can find sites where vendors have realistic, residual-based valuation expectations).

So, Is It Time to Get Building?

Looking back at recent *CrowdProperty* macro and property market presentations, these tend to capture the sentiment of the market in the main title. In November 2023, it was *Tough Times*. In March 2024, A Glimmer of Hope. In June 2024, A Window of Opportunity. And, most recently, in December 2024, *Let's Get Building*, which still fits the current landscape. The titles nicely represent how the market has strengthened and how property professionals, particularly developers, feel.

But is 2025 the year to get building? All of the main indicators are certainly pointing in the right direction — there's currently stronger demand, constrained supply, and plenty of government support. Collectively, these components can create tangible market opportunities. Already, we're starting the new year with:

A Stronger-Looking Economic Outlook

Inflation is under control, the MPC projects interest rates to be around 3.7% by the end of the year, unemployment is at a five-decade low, and we're seeing real wage growth — i.e., pay rising at a higher rate than inflation.

Continued House Price Growth

The outlook for the next 12 months is certainly far more positive than last year — mortgage rates are easing, and price growth is currently forecast at an average of 3.3% across our range of commentators, compared to -2.7% this time last year.

All things considered, the general consensus is that prices are well-balanced. Inflation-adjusted property prices currently sit at the same levels as 2003 amidst strengthening demand expectations.

This view is supported by *Zoopla's UK House Price Over/Under-Valuation Index*, which places current levels as 'balanced' and forecasts a move to 'under-valued' under 2.5% growth forecasts over the next 2-3 years.

With more transactions freeing up developers' equity for their next projects, less uncertainty around input costs, and a more confident exit market, housebuilding is once again seeing tailwinds. These are further boosted by the government's housebuilding stimulus.

For developers, especially small and medium-sized developers, there's a real opportunity to get building. The market offers an infinite supply of development opportunities for 1, 2, 5, 10, or 20 homes at sites that are uneconomic for volume housebuilders to pursue. However, despite the opportunities, challenges still exist, making the pathway to stacking deals far from straightforward. Yet, with the right insight, it is possible to carve out a clear pathway to success, starting with the best practice guidance I've shared below.

My Top Seven Tips for Developers Moving into the 2025 Market

1). Do: **Have the confidence to get building** — but still be selective about the sites you choose to take on, and make sure your decisions are underpinned by achievable economics. Developments invariably involve considerable effort and numerous contingent elements. Remember, there must be a worthwhile reward at the end of it all.

2). Don't: **Settle for anything less than great sites** — not all vendors' expectations are based on what can be paid for sites (always work from residual-based valuations when bidding). This means the better you are at finding great site opportunities, the more options you will have to trade off against each other. In turn, this will enable you to make better, more informed decisions about which sites to progress. We can help you validate the economics of sites, prioritise which sites to develop, and give you the focus to close the best transactions.

CrowdProperty's ESG Project of the Year: An 18 Unit, £3.35m Affordable Housing Development on the Isle of Arran

3). Do: Focus on the long term — as mentioned above, while there has been no real (inflation-adjusted) house price growth since 2003, nominal price growth of 100%+ during that time has meant that long-term asset holders have made considerable money.

Irrespective of the lack of real (inflation-adjusted) growth, if a property is purchased for £100,000 with a £75,000 mortgage, and the nominal house price growth of the last 20 years has inflated that figure to £200,000, your equity investment is now worth 5x. Wherever possible, keep more of the properties you develop to generate long-term, slow wealth.

4). Don't: Forget to be more strategic — Property development is a business, and you should therefore think extremely carefully about the market in which you operate; the customers you serve; the competition you face; and the capabilities you have to do business within your chosen geography/segment.

How can you excel, create competitive advantages, and generate greater profitability? Incorporating more business strategy thinking into your property business will benefit you in the short, medium, and long term.

5). Do: Think about scaling your activities — this is also a key business strategy consideration. While many of the components that make up developments may be bespoke to individual sites, they are consistent in terms of the resources that are required, especially people and partners. If you want to scale your business, it needs to become more efficient and easier each time.

Get this right, and you can successfully balance developing two concurrently running sites, when before it may have been just one. And then, before you know it, two becomes four, and so on. Focus on building your team and service providers around you to work together again and again, so that you can all achieve greater efficiencies and success together.

6). Don't: Overlook the importance of procurement — costs have been extremely volatile over the last few years, with raw materials and building contract quotations varying hugely in price.

Whatever your operating model (in-house vs. contracted-out works), make it your business to delve into the detail of your costs — to validate that they are correct and to identify hidden opportunities to cut them and make more profit. This is where you have the most control over the profitability of a site. Developing and/or recruiting professional procurement skills can add significant value in this area.

CrowdProperty's Project of the Year Winner, Solihull, West Midlands, 8 Units, £2.3m GDV

CrowdProperty's Project of the Year nominee, The Printworks, Bradford,137 Units £15.6m GDV

7). Do: Build well — last but by no means least, build with strong ESG (environmental, social, and governance) considerations.

While these can drive costs, owner-occupier buyers, investors, and tenants are increasingly valuing ESG credentials, especially the very tangible cost savings of operating the asset (e.g., energy efficiency). More and more, they are also valuing wider credentials such as the sustainability of building materials, ethical supply chains, inclusive designs, community engagement, and certification standards.

These factors help your development stand out, attract greater competition for buyers, and ultimately achieve higher GDVs. For example, the *CrowdProperty ESG Project of the Year* built 18 affordable housing units on the Isle of Arran, which attracted additional funding from the Scottish Government and was snapped up by a Housing Association in a single transaction, making for a quick and efficient exit.

Let's Get Building

I'm excited about what 2025 has to offer. Property development is fundamentally important to the economy and to housing, and there's a burning platform of demand ready and waiting to be taken advantage of.

With the right outlook and approach, small and medium-sized developers can play a pivotal role in transforming these opportunities into much-needed properties and spearheading the UK housebuilding sector's efforts to get building again.

Together We Build

CrowdProperty is a leading specialist property development finance business that has funded £884m worth of property projects to date. With 300+ years of property expertise within the team, the company's distinct 'property finance by property people' proposition means it understands what developers are looking for to help them succeed.

Apply in just five minutes at **www.CrowdProperty.com/apply** and get an instant Decision in Principle. Within 30 minutes, *CrowdProperty's* property experts will share their insights and initial funding terms, and go on to support the success of your project, helping you grow your property business quicker.

MAKING YOUR MARK

WHY A STRONG BRAND AND VALUES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR RAISING FINANCE

Oliver James
Founder of Property Branding

Know. Like. Trust.

The three key fundamentals for sales, right there. Now, ask yourself this: can an unbranded or poorly branded property business truly stand out in a sea of professional and branded competitors?

Did you know that 81% of consumers need to trust a brand before buying into it?...and this 81% are more than twice as likely to become advocates for the brand, massively increasing their average lifetime value to your business.

Gaining more investors, clients, or other key stakeholders for your property business (whether you're a one-man band or a larger team) works in exactly the same way. Although the entry points can vary, the funnel we put our leads through in advertising campaigns works in the same way — psychologically speaking — as a client journey, whether on a micro or macro level.

By utilising the branding philosophy explained in this article, I have helped hundreds of property companies raise multi-million-pound sums in private finance. So, without further ado, let's dive into how you can make your mark with a competitive edge and surpass your competition with industry-leading branding.

The Visual Identity: How Do You Want to Be Perceived?

What does identity truly mean? It's more than just a logo or a website — it's the essence of how others perceive you. Your identity shapes the emotions, thoughts, and feelings people experience when they encounter your brand.

Think about it: does your gym's logo make you feel powerful? Does the sight of the *McDonald's* arches spark comfort or satisfaction — or maybe something less appealing? These visceral reactions don't happen by chance — they are the result of a carefully defined brand identity that triggers a neurological chain of emotions. And it's this very chain of emotions that drives your target audience to take the desired action.

How you do what you do, coupled with how you want people to feel at the sight of your brand, ultimately shapes how your customers (or, in other words, your investors) see you as a property professional. We often talk about the importance of delivering your "why" to your audience so that your core values resonate with your target avatar, establishing the aforementioned three elements of sales: know, like, and trust.

Everything your stakeholders feel — whether through social media, your website, reputation, case studies, or relationships — stems from how you choose to define yourself. It all begins with the visual and emotional cues you present. So, how are you perceived in the market? How does your identity resonate with those who matter most to your business?

The Three Brand Types

Here's the game-changer: every property business carries not one, but three unique brands:

- **Personal Brand** – You, the property entrepreneur.
- **Business Brand** – Your company that delivers value and serves as the vehicle investors invest in or work with.
- **Product Brand** – Your property development itself, or the services you provide.

When all three brands are defined, their combined power is enormous, as all three strengthen one another. Just think about *Apple*. Steve Jobs was the personal brand, and, love him or hate him, his vision and mission captivated people. The business brand is *Apple*, and you likely have strong feelings about what they do in the market. Finally, the product brands are the *iPhone, Mac, iPad,* etc.

Let's relate this to property. You are the property professional with a personal brand and a mission to accomplish with set goals to achieve. Your business brand is a property development company and the vehicle investors will invest in, even though your personal brand initially draws them in. Your product brand is your new eight-unit development that needs to attract a type of buyer. The product brand, in this instance, is what buyers or tenants will be drawn to and, therefore, must be distinct from your company branding, as the requirements are very different.

This is an example of one of the designs created by the Property Branding team.

"YOUR BRAND IDENTITY ISN'T JUST WHAT YOU DO — IT'S HOW YOU MAKE PEOPLE FEEL."

People Buy from People

Grant Cardone is another excellent example of how a personal brand can drive a business brand to unimaginable heights.

It's difficult to tell how big (or small) his companies *10X and Cardone Capital* would be without his personal brand being so widespread. The crazy thing? He started with zero followers and zero posts, just like every other business-owning content creator.

Your brand identity isn't just what you do — it's how you make people feel. Are you looking to entertain your audience, educate them, or maybe both?

The C-Bridge

Let's talk about the heartbeat of every successful property business. At the top of that list is, of course, cash flow. But there's another "C" that bridges the gap between you and your target market — and also between riches and bankruptcy (to put it bluntly): connection.

Connection is the bridge between your brand and your stakeholders (AKA your investors) — the foundation of trust, loyalty, and impact. To thrive in today's world, informing, educating, and entertaining your audience must be at the forefront of everything you do.

When you offer transparency, you invite people into your world. You show them your values, your mission, and your "why." That's the power of branding. A strong, authentic identity doesn't just attract attention; it builds trust and inspires action.

Based on our experience of seeing the differences firsthand between companies that thrive and those that die in an increasingly competitive property market, branding is no longer optional. It's essential. It's the tool that communicatively bridges the gap between potential clients and your business. Branding ensures you stand out, build trust, and drive results.

Your logo, your message, your story — they all speak volumes about who you are. Done well, they become an unspoken promise to your stakeholders. A promise that resonates not just today but in every decision they make about you tomorrow.

The Golden Standard

To illustrate the pinnacle of branding success, let's revisit the golden standard: *Apple*. This $3.65 trillion powerhouse isn't just a tech company — it's a symbol of innovation, collaboration, and user-centric efficiency.

Apple's ecosystem does more than just sync devices easily; it creates a seamless, frictionless experience. *Apple's* speed, design, and ease of use set its products apart to such an extent that even its tagline, *"It just works"* speaks volumes about its entire business model.

What *Apple* understands better than any company of its time is one fundamental truth: make people's lives better, and they'll love you for it.

Based on this principle, we can relate this back to our property investment businesses as we raise capital by promoting ourselves and attracting high-net-worth investors, or advertising a development scheme, or even selling deals as a professional deal sourcer.

Rounding Up

First impressions drive decisions. Communities need cohesive connections. Trust and credibility must be established. Saturated markets demand differentiation, and sales need customer journeys that strike a chord.

Navigating the market with poor branding is like rocking back and forth on a rocking chair, wondering why you're not getting anywhere. Cutting corners on your story is like stopping your watch to save time.

Need I say more?

Our Blueprint Bundle — a free resource pack — has just gone live on our website. You can download it by scanning the QR code below:

SELECTIVE LICENSING

THE MYTHS, THE TRUTH, AND THE SUBTERFUGE

Des Taylor
Co-Founder of Landlord Licensing & Defence

At the end of 2024, after everyone knocked off for Christmas, the government ushered in a change to the use of selective licensing for privately rented properties.

This is bad news for landlords, who are already subject to a dizzyingly complex raft of regulations and legislation. It is also bad news for tenants, who are the landlords' only source of income, and it is they who will have to pay for the extra costs.

As the name suggests, selective licensing allows local housing authorities to select specific areas and make them subject to licensing. All they have to do is hold a 12-week 'consultation' with no oversight.

Selective licences are an additional requirement to those already required for HMOs and apply to single-family dwellings as well as all HMOs that don't need any other type of licence.

The changes have extended the housing-related powers of local authorities from 23rd December 2024. At that time, the government gave up having any control whatsoever over the local housing authorities, giving them carte blanche to introduce any selective licensing scheme (including the borough-wide ones the Secretary of State used to stop).

Increasing Demands

Over the coming year, landlords and tenants can expect to see selective licensing coming to their area with onerous demands on the landlords.

But no matter how ridiculous some of the selective licensing may seem to some people, failure to comply is a criminal offence with unlimited fines in court or a fine of up to £30,000 if the council issues a civil penalty fine.

Landlord Licensing & Defence was made to protect landlords and secure their assests from legislation changes

The selective licence conditions don't simply cover housing standards, as one would expect (and the majority of reputable landlords welcome).

They make it very clear that landlords are responsible for the behaviour of all residents and their visitors in the area subject to licensing, including anti-social behaviour and even crime. And that's not just in the property. Many local authorities specify "in the area around the property. Unfortunately, they don't all specify whether that's 5 metres, 50 metres, or 500 metres.

So what does this mean in practice? If an area is experiencing anti-social behaviour, the local authorities can use licence conditions to make the landlord criminally liable and responsible.

An Illustration of How This Can Work

Here's an illustration of how this might work. Jane, a 50-year-old accountant, inherits the house her parents lived in all their lives. She rents it to Debbie, a single lady with good references.

The local authority introduces selective licensing, and because Jane is savvy, she applies for a licence. The council sends Jane a draft licence containing multiple conditions. Jane reads the licence, but not being a Housing Act specialist, sees nothing troubling and thinks no more of it.

Unknown to Jane, local youths start hanging around the street and see the low garden wall as the perfect place to sit, smoke cannabis, drink alcohol, and throw their discarded cans on the floor whilst playing loud music into the night.

The neighbours start to complain, and the police are repeatedly called. Debbie is too scared to confront the gang, so she tells her landlord, who calls the council to report the anti-social behaviour taking place on the street right outside the property her parents kept pristine for over 50 years.

But rather than sending someone to help Jane and Debbie deal with the gang of youths, the council sends its enforcement officers to inspect Jane's property. They see the litter piled up outside and speak to angry neighbours. Instead of dealing with the root cause of the problem – the bored young people with nowhere to go – they issue Jane a fixed penalty notice of £15,000 for breaching the terms of her licence.

The Consequences of This Story

Jane is held criminally responsible for actions entirely beyond her control because she was deemed in law to have accepted all the conditions in her licence by default, as she didn't employ specialists to fight against them in the 14 days the council gave her to do so.

They allege: *"She didn't deal with the anti-social behaviour. She failed to address the noise in the vicinity of her property. She didn't control the drinking and drug-taking of the young people gathering near her house. She didn't implement a solution to the constant littering."*

But it gets worse for poor Jane. Any breach of housing regulations is a strict liability criminal offence, and she has to tell her professional body. As a regulated professional, this can mean she loses her job, can't afford to pay the penalty, and is left with no option but to sell the house. And Debbie loses her home!

The Road to Reinforcement

This is not some dystopian, worst-case scenario vision of authoritarian powers being abused. It's a regular scenario we've dealt with at *Landlord Licensing & Defence*, fictionalised to protect our clients.

So how did we get here?

Over the last few decades, there's been a slow creep towards prioritising the collection of revenue instead of dealing with the issues at hand.

The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gave local authorities the power to control parking and fine drivers who breached the rules. In 2004, the *Traffic Management Act* extended those local authority powers to cover moving vehicles, allowing local authorities to collect the penalties imposed for speeding.

Now, the focus has turned to the private renting sector.

Landlords come in for a lot of criticism – some of it justified, most of it not. Most landlords are ordinary people who are simply trying to make an honest living by providing decent housing.

People like 'Jane' are being held responsible for upholding standards in communities when they have no powers or authority to do so. Not the perpetrators, not their parents, not the police.

The Answer? Education, Not Enforcement

It's a very bleak picture, and the *Renters Rights Bill* currently making its way through Parliament doesn't offer any light at the end of the tunnel.

The Bill strengthens local authority enforcement by expanding civil penalties from a maximum of £30,000 to £40,000 per breach and introducing a package of investigatory powers and myriad new things that they can fine landlords for.

The country is experiencing a housing crisis. Handing more enforcement powers to local authorities won't solve this, and it won't help renters.

We need a solid framework of education and improvement, much like the car MOT system and speeding awareness education for drivers. Annual or bi-annual inspections carried out by properly trained, independent assessors whose priority is ensuring standards, either bringing properties up to scratch or taking them out of use.

If we can take dangerous housing off the market in the same way we keep deadly cars off the road, we can improve and expand the housing stock available for those who so desperately need it.

Oh, and a selective licence will cost, on average, £1,000 for 3-5 years. Jersey does it for £30/year, and they run a much more effective scheme.

If you have any queries about selective licensing or are in a situation where you need some pointers, please don't hesitate to contact us for a discreet conversation on how we can help.

CONTACT US

0208 088 8393

landlordsdefence.co.uk

NAPSA

PROPERTY SOURCERS AND DEAL PACKAGERS MUST GET 'INVENTIVE' IN 2025!

Tina Walsh
CEO of NAPSA

For those of you old enough to remember *Woolworths's* heyday, it had cornered the market in the 'one-stop shop' sector. However, after enjoying years of great success and growth, *Woolworths* began a steady decline from the 1960s until its final demise in 2009.

It is claimed that *Woolworths* failed because they didn't listen to their customers, underestimated their competitors, and failed to progress with the changing times. Basically, they didn't see what was coming until it was too late!

What has this got to do with property sourcing and deal packaging?

We believe that the property sourcing and deal packaging sector is heading in the same direction.

While the decline of *Woolworths* happened gradually over 40+ years, a similar demise occurred to *Blockbuster Video*, but over a much shorter time.

They didn't adapt to the market and customer needs and lost out heavily to *Netflix*, formerly *'LoveFilm.'* With an estimated 15,000+ sourcers and deal packagers currently operating in the UK, and thousands more each year being churned out of property courses, the sourcing and deal packaging sector is well along the road of that declining timeline.

With sourcers and deal packagers being told that they can cover the whole of the UK, for every strategy ever conceived, with little or no in-depth geographical or detailed strategy knowledge, topped off with a scary lack of understanding about the law and how to operate legally and professionally day to day, you have a recipe for disaster.

An Overcrowded Marketplace: What Sourcers and Deal Packagers Must Do to Survive

From conversations we have almost weekly through our support calls, it's clear that a significant number of those completing courses fail to find an investor to work with and earn little or no money at all through their businesses.

You see, when they emerge from the training with all the positivity and energy that they can muster, within a few months, it becomes apparent to most of them that things are not as described to them, and the struggle to earn even one fee feels like an almost impossible task.

When you come out into a marketplace that is 15,000+ strong, the vast majority of them working from the same scripts to approach estate agents, letting agents, sellers, and investors, and the same templates to attract sellers and advertise deals, you are entering an overcrowded marketplace.

Not really knowing your customers or competitors, and completely unaware of the 'changing times' that are already upon us, or what is coming to the 'property sales' sector.

Just like *Woolworths* should have done, the sourcing and deal packaging sector has to adapt and change with the times or collapse.

Sourcers and deal packagers must start to listen to their customers, understand market conditions, be aware of what their competitors are doing and saying, and stay right up to date about sector changes that are and will affect their businesses.

They have to stay ahead of the curve if they want success, and so they MUST be 'Inventive'!

So, What Does Being 'Inventive' Mean?

Invest

Invest in your knowledge of your chosen geographical area and the investment strategy you will support an investor with. Ensure that you are fully aware of what it takes to operate legally on a day-to-day basis.

Don't trust advice from *Facebook* groups, training courses, or networking events; the vast majority is poor at best and, in the main, completely inaccurate.

Get to know your competitors — what is their message, and how can you set yourself apart from them? This will give you the confidence to talk to potential investors about your day-to-day operations, your area, strategies, and how you will work with them.

Niche

Niche your geographical area and investment strategy. What works well in your area and where? A few streets or several areas? There will be 'sweet spots' where any strategy works to an optimum level; find them and understand them.

Perhaps think about niching in a different way to others — focusing on bungalows, for example.

Visibility

Increase your visibility on social media — not by selling, but by informing. Share content about your area, strategies, and what you are doing for a current investor.

Possibly create a newsletter about your strategies in your area for people to sign up for.

Expertise

Make yourself the expert in your geographical area and chosen strategy within that area. Become the 'go-to person' to answer questions. Make yourself the only choice for an investor who wants to use a sourcing agent in your area for your chosen strategies.

This will take time but will eventually make your marketing predominantly 'word of mouth,' with a waiting list for investors to join.

Negotiation

Learn negotiation skills for working directly with sellers or through other agents. This is an essential skill set if you are to progress your business and is often not mentioned.

Trust

Building trust with potential investors is key to having a long-lasting relationship with any client. Trust is not always given easily or quickly, so patience may be required. Remember that trust is a two-way street.

We come across many sourcing agents who have been taught to ask for a large fee upfront so that the investor doesn't go behind their back and steal a deal.

But doesn't that give the impression that you don't trust that person while expecting them to trust you? Think about that for a while...

Income

Look at ways to develop multiple income streams from your sourcing business. Perhaps monitor a refurbishment project for a client. (Note: I said 'monitoring,' not 'managing').

The vast majority of sourcing agents don't have the knowledge and skills required to 'manage' that task legally.) You could offer a viewing service for an investor, carrying out the viewing of a potential property for them and/or creating a report and video for a fixed fee.

NAPSA is launching an affiliate programme, where members can recommend *NAPSA* to other agents and earn a fixed fee for each one that signs up for membership.

Video

Gaining traction and reaching more people via social media channels is becoming harder and harder to achieve.One of the best ways to gain more reach and get more interaction is through video content.

A lot of sourcing agents, just at the mention of creating videos, run to the hills in fear. But it doesn't have to be scary, and it certainly doesn't have to be perfect. You don't have to appear on camera if you don't want to.

Film yourself walking around your patch, going to a viewing for an investor, or visiting local agents for a chat. Or chat about what you have been doing that week — taking the dog for a walk with the camera on the surrounding area and your dog!

Experience

All the previous points lead to you gaining experience, and with experience comes confidence.

When you know your area like no one else, when you understand your strategies on a street-by-street basis, when you know what your competitors are doing and saying, when you have a clear process for onboarding potential investors and sellers, and when you allow trust to build, you will speak in a completely different way to both sellers and investors. Networking becomes something you actively seek out and enjoy.

Final Thoughts

If you are starting out in the property sourcing or deal packaging sector, you obviously want to set up and run a business that will pay you to run it — or what would be the point?

What has worked in part for the last 12+ years that I have been involved in the sourcing sector will not work now and going forward. The sector has to adapt and change to meet not just compliance today, but also what is on the horizon for the next 2–3 years.

If we don't adapt, the sad stories that we hear every week of sourcing agents earning no money at all and investors losing hundreds of thousands of pounds every year will increase.

As an investor, why not seek out those agents who have got 'Inventive'? You will know from talking to them what their level of knowledge is. So start to filter out the ones who are just in it to get a few thousand in the bank, and build long-lasting relationships with those who are willing to take the time to learn a set of skills that, in the end, benefit you as much as them.

If you are at all concerned, please don't hesitate to contact the team at *NAPSA*, who are happy to advise and support you.

A SPOTLIGHT ON STUNTMAN TURNED HMO INVESTOR JONNY STOCKWELL

by Andy Graham

HMO Property Investor, Founder of The HMO Roadmap and Host of The HMO Podcast

When I began growing my HMO business, I started working with an experienced investor as a mentor, and it was one of the best investments I ever made, helping me take my portfolio to a whole new level.

Following a decade of investing in HMOs, I started mentoring HMO investors myself to provide guidance and help them achieve their own property ambitions. Over the years, I've worked with some incredible people and businesses.

One of the long-standing members in my mentorship programme is Jonny Stockwell, a professional TV and film stunt performer turned HMO investor. Here I'll talk about how Jonny got into investing in HMOs, what his investment strategy is and highlight one of his first investments and the lessons he learned.

HMO investment strategy

Jonny has been interested in property from a young age. His parents were always doing home renovations, and he worked for a builder for a couple years. When he and his partner, Rosie, bought their first home, they completed a renovation on it.

After that, Jonny and Rosie, a professional make-up artist in the TV and film industry, wanted to supplement their fluctuating incomes. They formed Crockwell Properties and started investing with a single buy to let, but quickly realised they needed an alternative to get the monthly income they wanted.

Following years of research, Jonny took the plunge into HMO investment. He loved the idea of turning run-down properties into high cash flowing HMOs. For their first investment, they bought two already tenanted HMOs together in 2019.

Once I started mentoring Jonny the following year, I helped clarify his vision, and from that, we built a business plan and developed strategies to deliver results. They have a laser-focused strategy of investing in student HMOs within a small area of Liverpool.

Additionally, the structure of the student turnover cycle works very well for them as they live in London, 200 miles from their HMOs, so they rely on their team to deal with any issues that crop up and maintain the high standards they're striving for.

Crockwell Properties concentrate on finding three-bedroom Victorian terrace houses and transforming them into sleek five and six-bedroom HMOs with large communal spaces. They aim to raise standards within the student HMO market in Liverpool and create spaces designed around tenants' wellbeing.

A stylish five-bed HMO with ensuites

Taking a look at a property they purchased in 2019, Crockwell Properties created a five-bedroom and five-bathroom HMO. Their principle goal was to ensure that every room had an ensuite and was at least 8m2 to 10m2.

This meant they couldn't make it a six-bedroom property, which was the original plan. However, they decided that five spacious rooms all with ensuites would future proof their investment and create a more desirable house, despite the loss in monthly cash flow.

With this project, they undertook a large refurbishment, taking the house back to the brick, using the existing basement space and going into the loft. The functional design and stylish finish made their property stand out.

The results, challenges and lessons

The project threw up some challenges with their 10% contingency getting swallowed up. The existing rear kitchen extension was very damp, forcing them to re-render and damp-proof the walls. They also found that the 100-year-old floor joists were rotten and needed replacing.

Towards the end of the refurbishment, they were hit by COVID-19. This caused delays in getting materials, and the pressure to finish the project was on. They then faced a delay in the building inspector signing off the work.

However, the biggest challenge came with the revaluation. From knowing their location so well and what other investors had their projects revalued at, they were confident that it'd reach £300k, but during the pandemic, the surveyor felt it was only worth £250k.

This was naturally disappointing, but it was a good lesson that despite having prepared as best they could, there are always things out of their control. Through our discussions, Jonny learned the importance of staying flexible when unexpected challenges arise. Thanks to good relations with their private investors, they paid them back plus their interest payments and used the money they withdrew from the deal to help fund their next project.

Once the project completed, Crockwell Properties managed to achieve 100% occupancy through an incredibly difficult time in the industry. They were inundated with requests to rent the house due to the property's strong appeal among their target demographic.

Buying the property for just £160k and spending £107k on the refurbishment, Jonny and Rosie added £21,800 in equity. They earned a 16% return on capital employed and bring in more than £14k in net annual cash flow.

Mentorship programme

When Jonny joined my mentorship programme, they owned three properties. Fast forward four years and they now own nine properties with one purchase currently going through. They run seven properties in total, managing 34 tenants, with further growth planned.

Jonny has mentioned how having someone to bounce ideas off made the process smoother for him, and I continue to support him in developing his knowledge, holding him accountable and ensuring he's moving towards his goals.

If you'd like to level up your own HMO investment strategy, there are a few spaces left in my one-to-one mentorship programme **The HMO Fastrack.** Visit **thehmoroadmap.co.uk** for more information.

AN OUTLOOK ON THE UK'S HOUSING MARKET

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE FOR SME DEVELOPERS TO BATTLE THE HOUSING CRISIS?

Shaunak Rauniar, Shiro Rauniar & Tex Jones
Founders of The Developers Club

It often feels like small developers are constantly fighting an uphill battle. Everyone, from the government down, understands that the UK is facing a housing crisis — one that affects us all, making property unaffordable for the vast majority of people.

That said, it's far from 'easy' for small to medium-sized (SME) developers to build housing and tackle this ever-growing problem. The system, from planning to funding, needs improvement before we can make a real impact on the country's housing shortage.

This article explores the current state of the UK housing market and outlines what needs to change to make a positive difference.

An Introduction to The Developers Club (TDC)

The Developers Club (TDC) was founded in 2022 by brothers Shiro (35) and Shaunak (30) Rauniar of *SATIS Group*, an award-winning development company based in Manchester. *SATIS Group* focuses on commercial-to-residential conversions and office developments.

The third partner is Tex Jones (35), a London-based property developer and leader of *Impact Capital Partners*, specialising in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) schemes. Together, they share a vision of uniting some of the UK's most ambitious and passionate SME property developers under the age of 40.

Our primary goal is to contribute to the delivery of new homes and address the housing shortage through the ingenuity and drive of the next generation of SME developers.

Through shared experiences, we have formed a network that learns, inspires, collaborates, and celebrates as we work towards delivering 10,000 new homes across the UK by 2030. TDC stands as a beacon of opportunity for those eager to make their mark in property development.

Our membership is split across three tiers:

- **The Academy:** This caters to property professionals and investors with at least two years of industry experience or two investment properties, offering a 24-month online development programme to assist members in achieving their first development project.
- **The Executive:** The Executive consists of developers that have delivered at least £1 million GDV (Gross Development Value) in completed new homes, aiming to scale their operations to deliver 10–30 units annually.
- **The Board:** This tier is for developers with over £10 million in completed GDV developments, focused on expanding their business to deliver 50+ units per year.

TDC is more than a 'network'. It's a community for ambitious developers where we share challenges, leverage each other's skill sets and help one another to grow — all while making a difference in the UK's housing shortage.

CLUB STATISTICS

Tracking the progress of our goal to deliver 10,000 new homes by 2030 is essential. The results make us proud of what our members have achieved in the UK and Ireland so far:

Homes Delivered:	**4,800**
Gross Development Value (GDV) Delivered:	**£1.1bn**
Homes In Delivery:	**2,883**
GDV In Delivery:	**£1bn**
Homes In Pipeline:	**4,937**
GDV Pipeline:	**£1.2bn**
Average Member Age:	**33**

An Outlook on The UK's Housing Markets

Planning:

Obtaining planning permission in the UK is not without challenges. It has become more complicated and expensive, especially for smaller developers due to layers of regulation and delays.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), along with local and regional policies, can be a maze of conflicting rules and guidance, which often leads to confusion and misinterpretation by planning officers and developers alike.

Additional regulations like *Building Control and Selective Licensing Schemes* add to the complexity, as they sometimes contradict the national framework.

SME developers must also deal with large quantities of poorly written legal documents, making it hard to understand what is required for compliance.

Over time, the planning department has become responsible for solving a range of social and environmental issues, from affordability to biodiversity, which places a heavy burden on smaller developers.

These growing demands increase costs, delay projects, and create significant challenges for developers trying to deliver housing efficiently.

Members of TDC at one of the clubs events

The Financial Strain of The Planning Process:

The planning process is full of financial challenges and delays. Developers must go through multiple stages, each with significant costs for reports, design work, surveys, and advice, often paid for through initial directors' capital or loans with no guarantee of success or refunds.

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) often miss their decision deadlines, leaving developers uncertain and under immense financial strain, with no penalties imposed on authorities for these delays or missing their statutory deadlines.

This uncertainty is made worse by the subjective nature of the planning system. Small policy issues or aesthetic disagreements can lead to refusals.

Planning officers often struggle to balance sustainable development with conflicting opinions from councillors, stakeholders, and the community, sometimes focusing on unrealistic ideals instead of practical and timely solutions. These challenges increase financial risks and delays for SME developers, slowing down the delivery of housing projects across the country.

What Does This Mean For The Future of Planning?

To address the challenges faced by SME developers in the UK planning process, the club has proposed several solutions up for discussion within our manifesto.

Simplifying and streamlining policies could reduce complexity, while regional planning or combined authorities might create more consistency across areas. Strengthening the pre-app process by making decisions binding and allowing for faster approvals where details can come later may improve efficiency.

Encouraging the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) and clearly distinguishing between different types of permissions could help, especially with well-trained case officers. Emphasising the importance of consultation periods and setting higher housing targets are also being suggested.

To speed up LPA decisions, introducing incentives, agreements, and updated Local Plans with accountability could help. Making aesthetic evaluations more objective, perhaps through pre-approved style guides, and better training for planning officers on how to assess the pros and cons of developments can help reduce uncertainties.

Funding

SME developers & housebuilders face significant hurdles when it comes to funding development sites, primarily due to the stringent lending criteria and limited access to affordable financing options.

Traditional banks often see these smaller projects and inexperienced developers as high-risk, making them less willing to offer loans or demanding high-interest rates, low gearing, and substantial collateral. As a result, SME developers turn to alternative financing options like private investors or crowdfunding, which can be unpredictable and unreliable.

The long planning process adds to the financial strain, as delays increase carrying costs and interest payments on borrowed funds. Economic factors, such as rising construction costs and shifts in housing demand, make profit margins uncertain.

Combined with the need to meet changing regulations and sustainability requirements, SME housebuilders often find themselves stuck in a cycle of financial and operational challenges that make it difficult to invest in and develop new projects efficiently.

SME Developers Sidelined:

Government initiatives, like the Homes England funding scheme, are meant to help SME developers, but their strict conditions and red tape often put off smaller developers. These programs tend to focus on larger projects, which align with their goals, leaving micro-developers working on smaller projects behind.

The complicated application processes and need for a lot of paperwork can be too much for SMEs without the resources to handle them. These initiatives also favour large-scale projects with big economic impact, sidelining the smaller, yet important, work of micro-developers. This lack of support creates a funding gap, which can limit innovation and adaptability among SME developers, preventing them from meeting local housing needs.

How Can We Address These Challenges?

To help SME developers access government funding, TDC has proposed several solutions. First, the government could create funding schemes specifically designed for the needs of SME developers.

These schemes should have simpler application processes with less paperwork and fewer compliance requirements, recognising that smaller developers often have limited administrative resources.

Additionally, creating tiered funding categories based on project size and impact could ensure micro-developers aren't overlooked in favour of larger projects, giving them fair access to support.

Another idea is to introduce advisory services and workshops to help SME developers through the application process and understand compliance. By offering mentorship and consultations with experienced developers or financial experts, SMEs would be better prepared to meet criteria and manage their projects.

Joining The Developers Club

As we look to the future of our industry, I invite you to join us on our journey at The Developers Club. If you're an aspiring developer or experienced housebuilder under 40 (when applying), there's a place for you in our vibrant community.

To apply, email us at info@thedevelopersclub.co.uk or visit our website at www.thedevelopersclub.co.uk.

We look forward to welcoming you and working together to shape the future of real estate.

CONTACT US

@thedevelopersclub.uk

The Developers Club.

info@thedevelopersclub.co.uk

www.thedevelopersclub.co.uk.

SAVOYS

THE TOP TWO PROPERTY STRATEGIES THAT COULD DOMINATE IN 2025 (AND WHY)

Sanjay & Malkit
Founders of Savoys Properties

After 24 years in the property industry, we've gained the experience to know what works and what doesn't. Looking ahead to 2025, we believe it's going to be a pivotal year. With almost a quarter of a century of investing behind us, we've identified two strategies that we believe will be essential for success in the year ahead.

Here are the two strategies we think you should implement in 2025, and why.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

A property is classed as an HMO if both of the following apply: at least three tenants live there, forming more than one household. In addition, you share at least one of the following: a bathroom or communal kitchen facilities with other tenants.

The reason we think HMOs are an ideal strategy in 2025 is for the following seven reasons:

1. Tenant Demand Is At An All-Time High

In the second half of 2022, we experienced a strong demand from tenants demanding flexible, affordable housing accommodation. This demand continued into 2023 and 2024.

SpareRoom.co.uk has confirmed that demand for shared rooms is at an all-time high, while supply has hit a nine-year low. *SpareRoom* says, *"UK room rents rose by 16% year on year when compared to Q3 of 2022, with the average monthly room rent hitting £721 – another new record. The average rent in both London and the UK as a whole is now at an all-time high."*

We expect the demand to pick up further in 2025, leading to higher rents which will help offset increases in monthly mortgages.

2. Council Tax Room Banding

Landlords have finally received a big win! Previously, tenants in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) that were single-banded were liable for as much as £1,000 a year each in council tax. It was widely reported that the Valuation Office Agency was approaching landlords of large properties and demanding multiple council tax payments.

Now HMOs will not be re-banded, and existing HMOs with individual banding should be removed by 1st April 2024. Therefore, this will be a massive win for both landlords and tenants and will only increase the popularity of HMOs.

3. Rental Yields

Rental yields are an important factor for many investors. With HMOs, rental yields can be up to three times the yield of the same property as a buy-to-let (BTL), depending on the location within the country. For example, if you take a three-bedroom house and let it to a family under one tenancy agreement, you may achieve £1,000 per month in rent (area dependent). However, if you rent those three bedrooms on an individual basis in an HMO at £650 per month, your rent is now £1,950 per month.

Here's the game changer: build a rear extension and loft extension to add three more bedrooms. In theory, this would increase your rental income to £3,900 per month, assuming you can rent each room at £650 per month. However, this depends on the property you are looking to buy, renovate, and convert into an HMO investment. This is where research into your property's potential for extensions, as well as local rental demand and regulations, becomes vital.

4. HMO Mortgages

When we first started investing in HMOs over 10 years ago, there was limited choice when it came to financing. However, today it is completely different, and in our experience, it's easier to obtain HMO finance. Following the rate scares from late 2022, it appears that rates have settled, and we are expecting to see mortgage rates fall in 2025.

We believe an independent mortgage broker is an important person for access to HMO finance. Your broker needs to completely understand what you are doing and what you want to achieve. For example, are you looking for a "Bricks & Mortar Valuation" or a "Commercial Valuation"? The biggest mistake investors make is assuming that all mortgage brokers are the same.

5. Reduced Void Periods

HMOs have less damaging void periods compared to BTLs. In a typical 6-bedroom HMO, if one tenant moves out, you still have five others paying their rent while you find a replacement for the vacant room.

We typically find that 3-4 rooms would cover the mortgage and running costs for an HMO, meaning the remaining rooms are your profit. Therefore, not only is your HMO likely to have fewer voids than a BTL, but it is also likely to be more profitable over the course of 12 months.

6. Renovation Costs

HMOs often require refurbishment and structural work to optimise the rental capacity of the property. However, most spending on HMOs may be regarded as a revenue cost, meaning it qualifies as either a corporation or income tax deduction.

Capital items, which are added to the acquisition cost for capital gains tax purposes, are usually easily identifiable, e.g., adding an extension, knocking down walls, building an annex, etc.

Where work is a combination of capital and revenue and carried out simultaneously, *HM Revenue* accepts that a reasonable and fair apportionment is allowed. Therefore, it is important to have good »

Savoys design their interiors to a high standard

records of any expenditure, summarised and receipted. Our suggestions would be as follows:

- Take photographs of any work carried out at its various stages
- Ask your tradesmen to provide a breakdown on their invoices. For example, 'build extension' or decorate 'existing property'
- Keep a copy of the property survey report

7. HMOs Are In Vogue

HMOs are very much in vogue at the moment. During our time within the property industry, we cannot think of a time when HMOs have been so popular with landlords and tenants. 20 years ago, HMOs were associated with Department of Social Security (DSS) tenants, called Local Housing Allowance (LHA) tenants today, or students.

However, fast forward to now, and HMOs provide vital accommodation for working professionals and are considered socially acceptable places to live.

Commercial to Residential – (C2R)

We have been converting commercial buildings to residential (C2R) since 2013. If you see our socials, you will see this is one of our favourite strategies, and it can be a hugely profitable one at that!

The reason that we think C2R is an ideal strategy in 2025 is for the following 7 reasons:

1. Demand Shift

Many businesses are embracing homeworking since the pandemic; what were once thriving offices are now empty spaces. This has significantly reduced demand for commercial premises, while the demand for residential housing is at an all-time high.

Offices and retail buildings are often spacious and ideal for development into unique new homes, which have valuable sale or rental potential.

2. Quicker and Cheaper Process

In 2021, the Government made amendments to the Permitted Development (PD) rights provided for by the General Permitted Developments Order (GPDO). That included buildings within Use Class E (commercial, business and service) to be converted into homes, without the need for Full Planning Permission.

If you want to convert commercial property to residential homes, you now just go through a Prior Approval process and can expect a decision within 56 days and lower planning fees.

3. Revive the High Street

The high street has already been a casualty of out-of-town supermarkets and internet shopping; however, it was hit even harder by the pandemic. This resulted in many local shops and businesses being forced to close that never reopened.

Converting empty high street commercial properties into residential homes is a way to bring people back into town and city centres and promote the regeneration of local communities and economies. People living in central parts of towns and cities create a greater need for local amenities such as cafes, bars, shops, and cinemas, which reinvigorate and restore life to our high streets.

4. Prime Locations

Many office spaces, retail units, and commercial properties are in central locations close to restaurants, parks, schools, and public transport links. This puts them in popular, prime locations for people who want to live in the heart of towns and cities, with everything they need on their doorstep.

5. Sustainability

The need to minimise the environmental impact of new homes has never been so urgent. Vacant commercial properties are brown-field sites. Converting them, as opposed to building on untouched Greenfield land, has huge benefits for the environment. Investing in brownfield development projects reduces the need for greenfield development, helps protect wildlife, and reduces energy emissions. Small-scale projects to unlock potential and repurpose commercial properties are an opportunity for a far more considered, creative, and sustainable approach to property development.

6. Opportunity to Add Value

Since we have been working with commercial properties, we have been doubling, tripling, and in some cases quadrupling the value of the property by changing the use to residential. Prices of commercial properties are often more competitive compared to those of residential properties in the same area. Because they're in a prime location, converting them to residential homes means they have profit potential and provide an opportunity to add value.

7. Creative Builds

Converting a commercial property can be a chance to be creative and make the most of original features, or a blank canvas with the freedom to adapt the space to a unique design. Some of the most stunning, imaginative homes are born from commercial conversions because, when designed with thought and ingenuity, these desirable buildings have unique charm and personality.

8. Stamp Duty

Following the Autumn 2025 Budget, C2R was the real winner. With Stamp Duty Levy Tax (SDLT) increased from 3% to 5% on secondary residential homes, Commercial Stamp Duty remains unchanged, and you don't have to pay SDLT, which is a real added bonus!

Thanks for reading.

We hope that you found this article useful. If you'd like to connect with us, then you can do so using the details below.

OUR DETAILS

http://www.SavoysProperties.co.uk
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PROPERTY NETWORKING EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE UK

THE PROPERTY DEAL NETWORK

The FREE monthly networking group for property investors.

A networking group for property investors who want to be active in property, doing deals, financing deals, sharing deals, obtaining deals or just discussing the deals you have completed.

More details can be found here:

www.propertydealnetwork.com/

NetGain CLUB

Multiple events in the UK. A fun, unique and informative community for established and aspiring property investors hosted by Mark Winship and Emily Smith.

Full event details can be found on our website:
www.netgainclub.com

BPN BRISTOL PROPERTY NETWORK

A friendly, interactive, supportive and positive space where you can learn more about property investing and business know-how. Whether you are a property newbie, an experienced property investor, landlord, or property service provider, you will be very welcome.

Location: 589 Southmead Road Filton BS34 7RG

For details on future event dates, contact the host:
wendy@solutionproperty.co.uk

PROPERTY INVESTORS NORTH EAST P.I.N.E

Property Investors North East is the go-to event for investors 'up't north'. Join a growing community of property folk and hear from industry experts every month.

Location: The Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle Upon Tyne
Time: 18:30
Date: The first Thursday of every month
Host email: peter@aqualettings.co.uk

PROPERTY NETWORKING BRUNCH – LEEDS

Food and a few drinks with property folk in Leeds City Centre. People of all experience levels are welcome.

This is a quarterly event. Contact me for more information on dates and times.

Host email:
carolinetolman@outlook.com

MCR PROPERTY SOCIAL

Details About the Event:

•NETWORK •FOOD •MUSIC •DRINKIES

Tickets Available Via eventbrite

Get ready for Manchester's newest and most exciting Property Event!

The Alan Manchester

Property Catalyst Club

An invite-only networking event for director-level property professionals. More information on how to join can be found on the website, or by emailing hi@bluebricksmagazine.com to request an invite.

Time: 13:30-15:30
Website: propertycatalystclub.co.uk

The Midlands Investor Networking Group (M.I.N.G) was established in 2016 to bring together professionals in the property industry, including developers, investors, and solicitors. Hosted by Mark Burrows and Vicky Chittock, our monthly daytime events attract up to 100 property enthusiasts.

Date: Second Monday of every month (No event in August)
Time: 10am-2.30pm
Website: mrbproperty.co.uk/network-events

One of the most vibrant and entertaining events in the North East, The Property Thing is hosted by long-established property investors Anthony Boyce and Paul Million.

Location: Blackwell Grange Hotel, Darlington
Time: 18:30
Date: Second Thursday of every month
Link: The Property Thing Group (Facebook)
Host email: anthony@therocketgroup.co.uk

Our very own networking event with a community of highly experienced property investors and industry experts who travel across the UK to speak for us. Free for members of Blue Bricks Magazine.

Location: 5-6 park place, Leeds (you can also live stream this event via Zoom).
Time: 18:30
Link: Check out 'networking' on our website bluebricksmagazine.com
Host email: hi@bluebricksmagazine.com

If you want to rub shoulders with like-minded people, be inspired and share ideas with those who are successful in property, you should attend. An event for all those who are either new to property, or are seasoned investors.

Location: Newport
For full details, visit: www.southwalespropertymeet.co.uk

Regional Property Meets is a collaboration project between 5 Alive Networking and local property entrepreneurs designed for property-specific professionals and their wider supply chain to meet and network in a comfortable environment.

Venue: Golf House, Worcester Ln, Pedmore, Stourbridge DY8 2RB
Date: Every last Wednesday
Website: fivealivenetworking.co.uk

A vibrant networking group in Morecambe hosted by Katie Banks and Peter Baker.

Location: The Morecambe Hotel, Morecambe
Time: 18:30
Date: Last Wednesday of the month
Booking link: www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/bay-property-network-27104233761

Our inclusive community welcomes all, whether you're an experienced investor or just curious about real estate. Our in-person network events allow you to enjoy delicious food while exploring a range of property topics, from trends to tips.

Website: propertyandpoppadoms.co.uk

Join us to learn more about the opportunity to invest in the development of high quality new homes in the UK.

For our upcoming breakfast events, visit our website: www.barwoodcapital.co.uk/events

**Professional investors only. Your capital is at risk.*