



Changing agricultural trends over the last few years have led to many landowners reviewing their business and looking for ways of improving returns. Making use of old buildings which are no longer practical for modern farming methods is one of the most common forms of diversification. Professional advice early on is crucial. Advice from a solicitor will help to ensure that hidden problems do not raise their head after the development has started or worse, when the completed units are being marketed.

## Access

Title investigations and enquiries at the local authority will need to be carried out to ascertain the status of the proposed access to the development. If any of these are classified as or affect public footpaths or bridleways or are in third party ownership, advice will be needed on what consents are required.

## Services

Enquiries will need to be carried out to ascertain the existence and location of utilities. Whilst the site may have existing services, checks will be necessary to establish whether they are subject to any restrictions and whether they are capable of serving an enlarged site. Any additional rights required or the variation of existing rights will need to be properly documented.

Stephen Bishop is a commercial partner at BLB Solicitors. Contact him on 01225 755656 or by email – [stephen.bishop@blbsolicitors.co.uk](mailto:stephen.bishop@blbsolicitors.co.uk)

## Commercial issues

A landowner has several options as to how to proceed with a development. He may decide to develop himself and sell or lease the units on completion; he may decide to sell the site to a developer, probably having first obtained planning consent and put in place all necessary agreements for access and services; or he may enter into a joint venture agreement with a developer to share the build costs and the profits. Early advice is vital to ensure that the landowner's position is protected.

## The completed development

Whether the development is commercial or residential, advice will be required on how the completed units are to be disposed of and on the merits of setting up a management company to maintain common areas.

With much of this preliminary work, lawyers work closely with surveyors and other professionals. This ensures that no problems are encountered at a later date and that maximum value is achieved for the completed development.