



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Open Doors Pilot

Invitation to landlords to take part



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Ministerial foreword

Our high streets are where commerce and community meet. They are the barometers of prosperity and the heartbeats of the places we call home.

For our communities, there are few things more dispiriting than the sight of boarded up shops. As habits change and consumer spending moves online, this is undoubtedly a worrying time for our high streets. We want to work with our landlords to respond and adapt.

We should never forget that Britain's great towns and cities, admired around the world, are products of evolution and renewal. From art clubs in flour mills to play groups in old ship yards, some of our most treasured community assets are found in settings built for other purposes.

It is in that spirit of imagination and opportunity that we launch this pilot of the 'Open Doors' project; a chance to open our empty shops to community groups. We're looking for five transformative shared spaces to be used by groups across the country.

For landlords – both public and private – there are many benefits of getting involved. They will gain from our work to make properties fit for purpose – an investment that will help in the longer-term when the premises returns to commercial use. Equally, they will enjoy the advantages of no longer paying empty property rates and will likely see a drop in their insurance costs once the property is occupied.

We are working closely with our partners at the Meanwhile Foundation, who will act as the broker to match public and private landlords with community groups to deliver the pilots, in a formula that has already been proven successful on a number of occasions.

Ultimately, by taking on temporary tenants, landlords can give back to their communities and support the regeneration of our high streets; a future success story that this government is proud to support.

Because the Open Doors project is just one strand of our wider plan to transform our high streets, set out at the recent Budget. Our plan includes a cut in business rates by up to a third for 90% of retail properties for two years; a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to make them fit for the future; a consultation on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in our town centres; and the creation of a High Streets Taskforce to help our high streets thrive.

So I urge landlords to come forward to be a part of this pilot, and I will be issuing a similar call to community groups once the five pilot areas have been confirmed. Because we are committed to creating stronger communities – both socially and economically – and celebrating the places we work and live in for years to come.

Introduction

The Government is inviting landlords to take part in a pilot scheme to help regenerate the high street and support community groups. The application form is at the end of this document.

The scheme will take place in five areas, matching landlords struggling to find tenants for their empty properties with community groups looking for space. The pilots will be directly managed by the independent charity, Meanwhile Foundation, chosen for its existing work and experience in operating a brokerage service matching vacant premises with community groups looking for spaces to work.

This pilot will support community groups who may need premises for several hours a day but are unable to take on a full lease, or who can often struggle to pay rents on town centre premises. It will also help regenerate struggling high streets by bringing empty properties back into use, increasing footfall and bringing life back into an area.

Once landlords are identified we will issue a similar call to community groups to come forward with proposals to use these spaces.

What is the purpose?

The overall objectives of the pilot are to:

- Support community groups to deliver much needed services to young adults and older people who are greater risk of suffering from loneliness;
- Raise the profile of community uses on high streets;
- Increase footfall in high streets and town centres;
- Help to build socially and economically stronger communities;
- Encourage meanwhile use to help support landlords struggling to cover business rates, utility bills and other costs;
- Provide new uses for empty properties on high streets.

Benefits of taking part

We are conscious that landlords have faced challenges in adapting to changes on the high street. This pilot will give landlords with vacant properties an opportunity to bring them back into use at no cost, as funding will be available for remediation and set-up costs.

It will also provide further financial benefits – landlords will no longer have to pay empty rates on the properties as they will be in use; insurance costs will likely come down as the property will be occupied; and occupation will help guard against squatting and unauthorised entry.

It also provides landlords with an opportunity to make a real difference to the wellbeing of the local community, and we hope this will be of interest to a range of landlords both from the public and private sector. By directly and voluntarily helping the local community the reputation of the landlord will be enhanced locally, and perhaps regionally/nationally. The scheme is open to any landlord, whether a local authority or other public body, a small business owner or a major property portfolio-holder.

By providing the initial funding for this project in five places, we hope not only to support groups across the country but also to raise the profile and benefits of meanwhile/temporary use of spaces. We hope this pilot will act as a catalyst for more landlords to come forward and engage with community groups in their area, and that it will attract additional financing from the private and charitable sectors. It will support high streets with high vacancy rates in areas of demonstrable need, and projects that work to improve community cohesion and engagement.

We are therefore inviting landlords to come forward with offers of spaces that could be used for the project by 31 December 2018, using the application form at the end of this document.

Assessing bids

Meanwhile Foundation and MHCLG will consider all offers of spaces, and hope that by providing funding for the pilots we can encourage landlords to consider how best they can support community groups in their area. Offers will be assessed on how well they meet the following criteria:

- **Strategic fit:** spaces should be able to help meet the objectives of the project as set out above;
- **Location:** we will seek to ensure a good geographical spread of the five spaces in England, so that the pilot can test different geographical aspects of the approach. We also expect spaces to be on a high street/in a town centre;
- **Area:** this should demonstrate above-average vacancy rates and need;
- **Duration:** spaces should ideally be available for at least 12 months from spring 2019, although we will consider a minimum of 6 months.
- **Size:** spaces should ideally be a maximum of 1,000 sq ft;
- **Clean up and fit-out:** spaces should require no more than £25,000 to be spent on ensuring the space is fit for use.

Following the closing date for applications from landlords on 31 December, decisions on the successful applicants will be made by a panel comprising Meanwhile Foundation and MHCLG and announced in January, alongside an invitation for community groups to express interest in using the spaces.

While we are piloting the scheme at this stage, this is with a long-term view of making it easier to bring empty units back into use and is part of a wider package of work supporting high streets and community groups. We will consider options for how best to do this throughout the duration of and following the pilots.

Funding arrangements

The majority of the funding for the pilots will go directly to Meanwhile Foundation, who will manage the process and funding with parties involved in the pilot on behalf of MHCLG. They will hold the leases with landlords on behalf of community groups, and issue licenses for their use according to need. Government has previously published industry standard [template leases](#) that can be used for this purpose.

Funding will be provided for:

- Legal fees;
- Set-up fees and remediation (we expect to spend no more than £25,000 on each space to ensure it is fit for use);
- Running costs (including utilities and business rates); and
- A programme coordinator for the pilots.

MHCLG will monitor and evaluate the pilot to help inform future policy and funding decisions.

Timeline

Autumn 2018: Announcement and publication of call for landlords to come forward with spaces

Winter 2018: Decision on spaces announced, and applications invited from groups

Early 2019: Decision on community groups and leases signed

Spring 2019 – spring 2020: Community groups use spaces

How to apply

Interested landlords should complete the brief application form below. The closing date for applications is 23:59 on 31 December 2018.

All details on the application form will be kept confidential during the assessment process and will not be shared outside of MHCLG and Meanwhile Foundation.

Electronic applications are preferred and should be sent to laura.hurley@communities.gov.uk. Paper applications will also be accepted and should be sent to the following address:

FAO Communities team
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2nd Floor Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Any queries should be directed to laura.hurley@communities.gov.uk.

OPEN DOORS POLICY – APPLICATION FORM FOR LANDLORDS

SECTION 1: Contact details		
1.1 Lead contact for the application		
1.2 Role and organisation of the lead contact		
1.3 Contact address		
1.4 Telephone number(s) (a) Office (b) Mobile	(a)	(b)
1.5 Email address of lead contact		

SECTION 2: Location details of proposed space	
2.1 Address	
2.2 Local authority	
2.3 Supporting details about the area (if applicable and known) such as anecdotal summary of the high street/town centre; deprivation levels; vacancy rates	

SECTION 3: Further details of proposed space	
3.1 Size of space (sq ft)	
3.2 Date of last occupancy	
3.3 Reason for vacancy (if known)	
3.4 Please outline any ongoing running costs e.g.	
3.5 What is the planning use class of the property?	
3.6 What is the rateable value of the property?	
3.7 Do you have a floorplan of the property? If yes, please attach.	
3.8 Do you have recent photographs of the interior and exterior of the property? If yes, please attach.	
3.9 Please give a brief description of property including any urgent fit-out/repair works needing to be undertaken	

3.10 Likely duration for which space could be used	
3.11 Is a water survey or information on supply available?	
3.12 Is an electrical survey or information on supply available?	
3.13 Are there legislative constraints to making changes such as listed buildings consent?	
3.14 Is there appropriate heating and ventilation available?	
3.15 Does the property have asbestos?	
3.16 Are Fire/Smoke/Carbon Monoxide alarms and emergency lighting installed and serviced/tested?	

Transparency and privacy

Meanwhile Foundation will be expected to spend funds in an open and transparent way. We would expect plans relating to the projects to be publicly available. In addition, we will expect details of the projects and progress to be made available to Meanwhile Foundation and MHCLG over the duration of the project including taking part in monitoring and evaluation.

Any personal data provided through the application will be processed in line with data protection legislation. The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are entitled to under the Data Protection Act 2018.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Data protection legislation sets out when we are lawfully allowed to process your data. The lawful basis that applies to this processing is 6(1)(e) of the GDPR: the processing of personal data is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority.

Your personal data is being collected to choose places to take part in a pilot matching landlords of vacant premises with community groups looking for space on a temporary basis. We are processing your data as part of the application phase deciding which places will be included in the pilot.

We may also use it to contact you about further opportunities to apply for this project if we expand the pilot in future.

We will share the information with Meanwhile Foundation and Meanwhile Space as we assess the applications.

Your personal data will be held for the duration of the pilot, including monitoring and evaluation.

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have rights that affect what happens to it. You have the right to:

- a. know that we are using your personal data
- b. see what data we have about you
- c. ask to have your data corrected, and to ask how we check the information we hold is accurate
- d. ask to have your data deleted
- e. complain to the ICO (see below)

In some circumstances you may also have the right to have all data about you deleted, or to object to particularly types of use of your data. We will tell you when these rights apply.

Your personal data will not be sent overseas.

We will not use your data for any automated decision making.

Your personal data will be stored in a secure government IT system.

When we ask you for information, we will keep to the law, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

If you are unhappy with the way the department has acted, you can [make a complaint](#).

If you are not happy with how we are using your personal data, you should first contact dataprotection@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

If you are still not happy, or for independent advice about data protection, privacy and data sharing, you can contact:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire,
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545 745
<https://ico.org.uk/>