

Journey objectives

We set the objectives, map the journeys, derive the architecture from them, then list the points to watch. Two journeys shape the whole service: the person looking for a room, and the one offering it.

01

Know who you’ll live with, before viewing

Every room introduces the current flatmates: first name, age, routine, verified status.

02

Write without paying or a long sign-up

The first message goes out in under a minute, whatever the age of the ad.

03

Reassure at the moment fear arrives

Advice and checks at the first message, the viewing and before the deposit, not in an FAQ.

04

Leave no one without an answer

Reply times shown, explicit refusals, alternatives offered when a room goes.

WHAT THE JOURNEY MUST DELIVER

A first message in under a minute, a video call with the flatmates before any viewing.

Today, the first message requires a full sign-up and, for an ad less than 7 days old, an Early Bird payment.

SOURCES

Method: expert review of the site, 46 findings (audit grid, Excel).

Field: spareroom.co.uk and m.spareroom.co.uk, logged-out visitor, 04/10/2026.

Quotes: Trustpilot reviews (2026), Vice (2023).

Figures: SpareRoom Rental Index Q2 2026, Action Fraud.

The two targets

The whole service rests on these two people. Live-in landlords and agents fit into the offering journey; they don't create a third one.

TARGET 1 · THE SEEKER

The one who searches

Lena, 26, is moving from Leeds for a job in London. Budget: £950 a month. She searches at night on her phone, writes to ten ads a day and gets one or two answers.

WHAT SHE NEEDS

- See who lives in the home
- Write quickly, without paying
- Know whether the rent is normal
- An answer, even a no
- Talk to the flatmates before viewing

WHAT BLOCKS HER

- Mixed results (studios, houses)
- Sign-up before the first message
- Early Bird: paying to write
- Silence after sending
- Fear of losing her deposit

”I feel like I’m going to job interviews for the right to sleep somewhere.” (persona, quote imagined from the reviews)

TARGET 2 · THE FLATMATE IN PLACE

The one who opens his door

Tom, 29, lives in Hackney with two flatmates. A room frees up in a month. He posts on a Sunday and gets 80 messages in two days.

WHAT HE NEEDS

- Post quickly, from his phone
- Show the flatshare as it really is
- Sort applicants without reading everything
- Answer everyone without losing his evening
- A quick meeting before the viewing

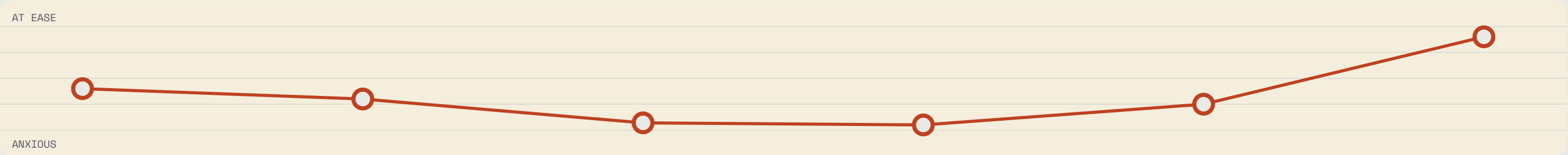
WHAT BLOCKS HIM

- A 6-step form
- No space to introduce the flatmates
- Messages that all look the same
- Guilt about not replying
- Fear of picking the wrong person

”I’m not looking for a tenant, I’m looking for someone to share the kitchen with.” (persona, imagined quote)

Journey 1 · "Lena is looking for a room"

The seeker, from search to move-in. The curve shows how she feels: where it drops is where the service must be simplest, not richest.



STEP 1

She searches

She types "Hackney" and gets 12,391 ads: rooms, whole houses, agency studios.

Screens: Home, Results

Friction

She doesn't find what she wants and has to filter on her own.

SpareRoom's answer

Rooms in shared homes by default, an exact counter.

STEP 2

She sorts

She opens listings to find out who lives there. None of them say.

Screens: Results, Listing

Friction

She compares amenities, not people.

SpareRoom's answer

"Lives here" on every card, "Who lives here" at the top of the listing.

STEP 3

She writes

She clicks "Message": full sign-up, then Early Bird for recent ads.

Screens: Message, Sign-up, Early Bird

Friction

A sign-up wall and a payment discovered at the moment of acting.

SpareRoom's answer

Write first, one-step account, free contact.

STEP 4

She waits

She wrote to ten ads. One or two answer. The others stay silent.

Screens: Messages (logged in)

Friction

Silence: she can't tell whether she was turned down or the ad is dead.

SpareRoom's answer

Reply time shown, explicit refusal, alternatives.

STEP 5

She views

She finally meets the flatmates. She is asked for a deposit.

Screens: Viewing, Deposit

Friction

Fear of a scam: no safety advice to be found at that moment.

SpareRoom's answer

Video call before the viewing, a safety box before the deposit.

STEP 6

She moves in

She signs and moves in, or starts all over again.

Screens: Agreement, Move-in

Friction

If it fails, nothing helps her start again.

SpareRoom's answer

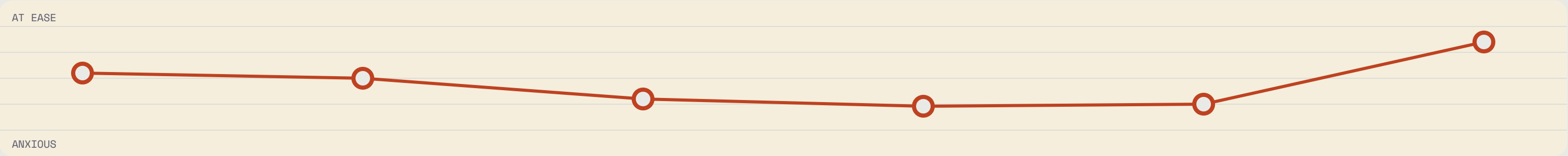
The 6-step gauge, and similar rooms suggested.

THE CRITICAL MOMENT

Steps 3 and 4. When she tries to write, she hits a sign-up wall, then a payment; after sending, silence. That's where SpareRoom loses trust, long before the viewing.

Journey 2 · "Tom is looking for someone for the room"

The flatmate in place, from posting to choosing. Less anxiety, but overload: his being swamped is what creates the silence Lena experiences.



STEP 1

He posts

He describes the room in 6 steps, with dropdowns, from his phone.

Screens: Post an ad (6 steps)

Friction

Long and designed for desktop.

SpareRoom's answer

Three steps, designed for mobile.

STEP 2

He introduces the flat

The form asks how many they are, never who they are.

Screens: Post an ad · occupants

Friction

Applicants can't know who they would live with.

SpareRoom's answer

A "Who lives here" step: a mini profile for each flatmate.

STEP 3

He receives

80 messages in two days, almost all the same.

Screens: Messages (logged in)

Friction

Overwhelmed, he only reads the first ones.

SpareRoom's answer

Structured messages: introduction, routine, move-in date.

STEP 4

He sorts

He looks for signs of reliability in uneven profiles.

Screens: Seeker profiles

Friction

Nothing sets a verified applicant apart.

SpareRoom's answer

A verified badge and profiles in the same format as the flatmates.

STEP 5

He replies

He replies to a few, ignores the rest, and feels guilty.

Screens: Messages

Friction

Ghosting starts here, on the advertiser's side.

SpareRoom's answer

One-tap reply: "The room is taken", sent to everyone.

STEP 6

He chooses

Call, viewing, agreement with the new person.

Screens: "You and them" pair, Viewing

Friction

No tool to involve the other flatmates in the choice.

SpareRoom's answer

The "you and them" pair lights up when everyone has said yes.

THE CRITICAL MOMENT

Steps 3 and 5. Eighty identical messages, no way to answer everyone: the ghosting seekers complain about comes from advertisers being swamped. Both journeys get fixed together.

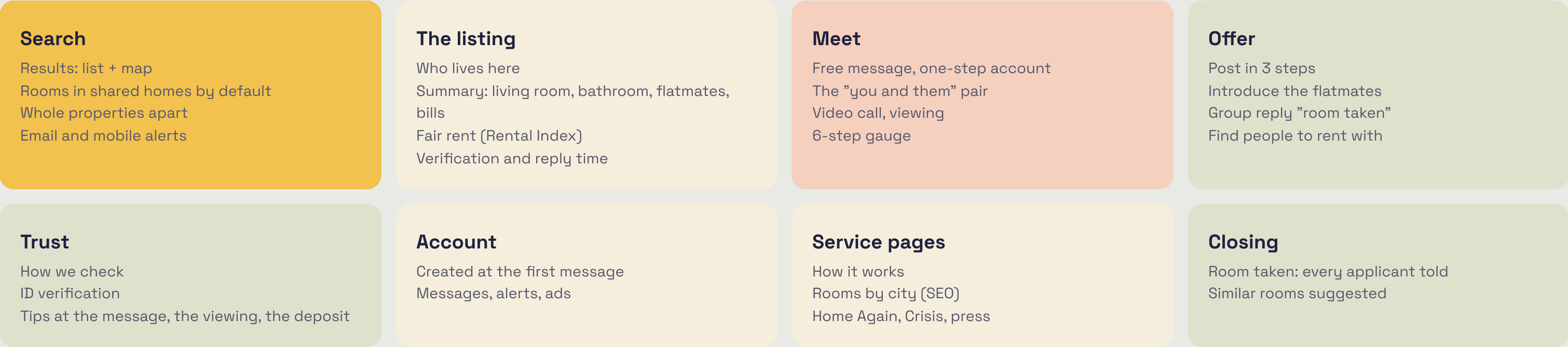
Architecture derived from the journeys

No page that doesn't serve a step of the two journeys: a block that doesn't help the decision leaves the sitemap.

LEVEL 1

Home

One search at the centre and three entries as verbs: "I need a room", "I have a room to fill", "Find people to rent with". The promise as the headline.



OUT OF THE SITEMAP

Paying to write

Early Bird goes for seekers: monetisation moves to advertisers.

OUT OF THE SITEMAP

Commercial badges

"Featured", "Boosted", "Free to contact" are no longer shown to seekers.

OUT OF THE SITEMAP

The separate mobile site

A single responsive site replaces m.spareroom.co.uk.

Points to watch and next steps

The most expensive mistakes on this kind of service, to check screen by screen during design.

Flatmates’ consent ”Who lives here” shows people who didn’t post the ad: nothing without their explicit consent, first name and photo editable.	No disguised discrimination Filters on flatmates (age, gender, routine) must stay within the law and never exclude.
Always say where things stand Every message has a status: read, answered, room taken. Never silence by default.	The business model Dropping Early Bird for seekers means making it up on the advertiser side: to validate with the business.
Safety without fear Useful reminders at the right time, not anxious warnings on every screen.	Visible states Hover, keyboard focus, disabled button: without them, you can’t tell what responds.

NEXT STEPS

What we produce next

WIREFRAMES	Home, results, ”Who lives here” listing, message, ”you and them” pair, post in 3 steps.
MOBILE DECISIONS	List only or list + map on results; posting form with one field per screen.
USER TESTING	5 people, 2 scenarios: find a room and write; post a room and reply.
MEASUREMENT	Drop-off between ”Message” and sending, time to first reply, share of messages left unanswered.
MOCK-UPS	Only then: home page, mobile screen and post (day 5), with the approved identity.

Method: heuristic analysis of the journey and the architecture, screen by screen.