



Archaeology

Managing The Unpredictable Risk

Developers face many risks when purchasing and developing sites. Many of these risks can be easily quantified by the developer as they are relatively predictable. Archaeology is one of those risks that developers face that can be very unpredictable. Therefore, at the point that a developer buys, or secures an option on a site, the potential financial and programming risks presented by archaeology are almost totally unknowable without expert independent advice.

What are the risks that archaeology poses to successful financially viable development proposals?

Firstly, on occasion, the presence of a Scheduled Ancient Monument or remains that are considered to be of 'national importance', within or nearby a site can result in development being so constrained (or even simply not permitted under any circumstances) that development is as good as impossible. This situation is unusual, but certainly not unheard of.

More commonly, it is the financial risk that is greatest to proposed developments. That is, development may not be physically constrained but the costs of resolving archaeological issues could be such that the financial viability of the development is jeopardised and anticipated margins cut or even wiped out. Furthermore, archaeology poses a threat to cost control and cash flow throughout project planning with the risk of either totally unexpected, or at least additional, costs being ever present until the discharge of planning conditions.

The need to resolve archaeological issues can lead to delays in the granting of planning permission, or even worse, the refusal of planning permission if not adequately addressed in a planning application.

One of the most serious risks is the potential for unexpected delays, or even total postponement to construction arising from unanticipated archaeological investigations or an increase to the scope of investigations after they have commenced,



On top of this, there is a trend for Local Planning Authority archaeological advisors to require an ever greater quantity of archaeological work in support of planning applications at an ever earlier stage in the planning process as well as an increase in the archaeological conditions imposed on planning permissions.

So, how does a developer overcome, or at least manage, these risks? The answer, like with many risks, is seeking quality independent advice as to the potential risks and costs early in project planning, preferably even prior to site acquisition. In this way, it is possible to build in to the development process the appropriate archaeological risk assessment and management right from the start, in the same way that contamination is commonly addressed. After all, to a developer, archaeology is essentially a form of non-dangerous contamination.

The UK's largest independent archaeological consultancy, CgMs, can provide advice as to whether, what and when archaeological issues may need to be addressed. This advice may take any of number forms, such as archaeology is a non-issue at one end of the spectrum, through to the potential need, costs and timings of multi-million pound excavations to discharge planning conditions at the other end of the spectrum.

Whatever the severity of the archaeological risk, by assessing and managing the risks from early on in project planning, CgMs can deliver increased certainty and cost control to clients when purchasing and developing sites across the UK. We can ensure that the appropriate research is undertaken at the land purchase stage to enable the archaeological costs to be taken into account in conditional and non-conditional bids. CgMs will also ensure that the appropriate type and quantity of fieldwork, be it evaluation, excavation and/or watching brief



CgMs is the largest independent archaeological consultancy operating across the UK from offices in London, Birmingham, Newark and Cheltenham.

For further information please call Rob Bourn (Director) on 020 7832 1473 and visit our website www.cgms.co.uk.