

# Make the most of your vacant site

## Do you own a vacant site?

Fed up with people saying the market is dead? Always hearing the same old excuse for your site? If that's the case then read on and you may find a solution. There is no doubt that we are in a challenging market where developing a vacant site with speculative buildings is a risk too far for many. That being the case, don't just develop weeds, rather review the potential for income, security or even just savings on empty rates.

## Market opportunities

Not all sectors in the market are dead and indeed some companies are growing. Take for example:

- The automotive industry, where sales were down by 37% in the last few months and there is consequently a build-up of cars that aren't selling. This means that there is a sudden excess of cars to store which are too expensive to keep on the doorstep of the factory. There are therefore a number of car storage operators who are keen for sites not only to buy, but also to lease short-term. They can put in palisade fencing, install security, and cars can be safely and securely compounded until the market recovers. These types of sites could already fall in line with existing consents, and if not would only require temporary permissions.

- Recycling companies, particularly in light of the emerging biomass waste transfer sector, can take advantage of existing industrial sites and achieve their sui generis use. These are longer-term options but with shorter term requirements, for example for the storage of trailers holding baled recycled waste.
- Changes in the logistics sector are also creating a market for the storage of artic trailers across the country. These require vehicle storage consent as well as Operators licences (O' licence) from The Department of Transport which can be obtained relatively easily.
- Other short-term uses include small-scale commercial operations such as carwashes, as well as car auctions, car boot sales or just pure open storage of containers or equipment.
- Seeking planning consent for temporary advertising can also provide a significant windfall for many vacant sites where incomes can be considerable depending on the prominence of the location.

The market for all these uses remains strong.

**CgMs**, our joint venture partner, briefly outline over the page current planning legislation and the types of temporary planning permissions available.



Potential car storage site

## Planning position

Use of an open site for storage purposes does not generally require planning permission if it is for less than 28 days in any calendar year. Where permission is required, **CgMs** can advise on the prospects of that permission being forthcoming and the best strategy to obtain it.

The starting point is to understand the existing authorised use, which is not always straightforward if there are no recent permissions. Whether the proposed use would be supported depends on the policies of the development plan and other 'material considerations'. This will increasingly be the need to provide new jobs and support for businesses changing operational requirements in the light of the economic downturn. Issues normally arising are:

- Visual impact
- Traffic generation
- Environmental effects
- Signage

Councils are often reluctant to grant permanent permission for open storage use because of the low levels of employment generated and adverse visual impact – but this can sometimes be overcome by volunteering permission for a limited period. Applications can then be made to extend the permission, or to make it permanent.

In a limited number of cases it may be considered appropriate to store without the relevant permission, and **CgMs** can advise on the risks of enforcement action.

## How we can help?

With **CgMs** advising on the planning strategy, and **NB Real Estate** advising on market demand, we have a formidable team to prepare your site for immediate marketing and to capture the audience to provide solutions, and income, as quickly as possible.

Visit [www.industrialrelocation.co.uk](http://www.industrialrelocation.co.uk) for information about **NB Real Estate** and our Industrial Occupier Services team, also [www.cgms.co.uk/commercial.php](http://www.cgms.co.uk/commercial.php) for information about **CgMs**' commercial experience.

For an informal chat please contact:

### **Andrew Smith**

Director, Industrial Agency and Development  
NB Real Estate  
25 Sackville Street  
London W1S 3HQ

DD: +44 (0)20 7544 2119  
[asmith@nbrealestate.co.uk](mailto:asmith@nbrealestate.co.uk)

### **Chris Hicks**

Director of Planning  
CgMs  
Morley House  
26 Holborn Viaduct  
London EC1A 2AT

DD: +44 (0)20 7832 1474  
[chris.hicks@cgms.co.uk](mailto:chris.hicks@cgms.co.uk)

*Jointly published by CgMs and NB Real Estate, January 2009*