

dealing with archaeology: consultancy advice and the design and management of projects

Today, property industry professionals are asked to reconcile the need for new development with requirements to protect and record remains of the past. Experienced developers meet this challenge by incorporating archaeology into their early risk assessment procedures.

MoLAS Consulting is a separate arm of the Museum of London Archaeology Service, established in response to demand from the property world and providing authoritative advice to developers and their teams throughout the design, planning and construction process. Areas of expertise include buried archaeological remains as well as historic buildings, with the emphasis on smoothing the integration of archaeology with development. The consultancy covers several issues, as follows.

Due diligence: with archaeology now treated as one of a range of environmental issues affecting development projects, MoLAS Consulting contributes to feasibility studies, providing assessment of likely issues and costs. Confidential advice can be given before a site is acquired.

Framework agreements: MoLAS Consulting has several 'call-out contracts' with major organisations. These agreements give clients rapid access to strategic advice, whether for an entire property portfolio or individual site.

Risk appraisals: advice is aimed at identifying and managing risk effectively. Risk appraisal reports, tailored to meet the particular needs of the client, specify the issues facing a particular scheme with reference to national planning policy, local and unitary development plan policy and statute. Risk appraisals are frank, confidential reports prepared solely for the client, distinct from 'desk-based archaeological assessments' prepared for submission in support of planning applications.

Adding value: increasingly, developers are recognising the potential to use their archaeological sponsorship to derive real social and economic returns. MoLAS Consulting highlights the complementary value of the historic environment at the start of a project, so that opportunities to enhance a proposal can be realised. This is no longer simply a matter of short-term publicity, and involves consideration of the positive sense of place that the office workers, residents and neighbours of a development can feel.

Heritage management: consultancy advice is provided to clients in the heritage sector. Recent work has included site inspections at World Heritage Sites, both in the UK and overseas, the preparation of Management Plans and Conservation Plans, and the development of archaeological resource management tools and procedures.

Expert representation: MoLAS Consulting can supply expert knowledge to the developer throughout the design, planning and construction process. Experience has shown that integration with the professional team is a major factor in the accurate identification and control of direct and indirect costs. MoLAS Consulting also provides expert testimony at Public Inquiries.

Navigating the planning framework: finding a smooth route through the planning system, with its Planning Policy Guidance and Environmental Statement requirements, depends upon access to the right information at the right time. MoLAS Consulting aims to provide its clients with certainty in a field which revolves around discovery.