

Guidance for Developers

Planning and the Historic Environment

As part of the process for assessing applications for planning permission Durham County Council (DCC) is required to consider the effects of a development proposal on the *historic environment*.

The historic environment includes all features of the county that have been built, formed or influenced by human activities at any point up to the present. It includes everything from prehistoric flint tools to castles, remains of plants used in the past to earthwork remains of villages.

Particular sites, areas or buildings are known as *heritage assets* in planning terms. They can also be *designated* (broadly speaking, defined in either law and/or planning policy as requiring special consideration) or *non-designated* - which literally means they just haven't been designated. And just because a heritage asset is non-designated, doesn't automatically mean it is of lesser importance.

DCC employs specialist advisors to advise on appropriate and reasonable protection for the Historic Environment, in line with relevant legislation, policies and guidance.

The Planning Process

As part of the decision making process on a planning application, or as a condition on planning permission, DCC may ask you to provide certain information, and/or carry out certain works. This brief introductory guidance sets out what may be needed, to help you get a basic overview of what is involved. This guidance relates mainly to non-designated heritage assets, as designated assets usually have more formalised decision making processes in place.

The types of work needed pre-determination can be divided into four main phases. Depending on the location and impact of your development you may have to deal with more than one of these phases. We would always recommend, though, that before you commission any archaeological work, you make contact with us to clarify what is needed.

Assessment – this is the preliminary investigation of a site at the very earliest stages of considering a possible development. The exact details of the type of development or its layout may not be known at this point. The assessment merely identifies if there is likely to be an historic environment issue on the proposed site. A desk based assessment (DBA) can be as simple as asking for a pre-application opinion from DCC as to any issues, through to a formally commissioned DBA report produced by a professional archaeologist. DCC Archaeology Section rarely require formal DBAs for applications, so if you are considering commissioning one, we would recommend contacting us for advice first.

Whilst DCC encourage early engagement with historic environment aspects of a development, until a formal Pre-Application Inquiry is submitted, only generic advice can be given.

Evaluation – this is a more detailed investigation of a site. The Assessment phase will have identified the potential for heritage assets on the site, and this phase aims to clarify their nature, extent and date in more detail. This usually involves fieldwork, often a combination of geophysical survey and trial trenching, but other techniques may also be appropriate. This phase of work can happen in pre-application discussions, or after an application has been submitted. But as it is usual for the results to be required prior to a planning decision being made, it is best not to wait until the application is submitted before addressing any issues flagged up by an assessment, as this could incur delays. Typically, we will ALWAYS ask for field evaluation for a green field site over 1 hectare, as previous experience has shown that these sites regularly contain previously unknown archaeological remains.

Mitigation – This is when heritage assets have been positively identified on the site, and enough information about them has been gathered to determine how they should be managed. There are two main methods of mitigation, but many ways to achieve them. The main methods are **Preservation In situ** – the heritage asset is protected undisturbed on the site where it is, if possible. This could be done by designing open space areas into the development, or using foundation design to limit impact. The other option is **Preservation by record** – the heritage asset is sufficiently investigated and recorded, and the records permanently stored and made available. This involves further fieldwork such as excavation or survey, in more detail than at the Evaluation stage.

Post Fieldwork Phase – regardless of what work happens when, there will almost always be a post field work phase. For large or long term projects there may be more than one of these phases. In this phase, the information gathered needs to be analysed, reported on, prepared for archiving, and if sufficiently significant, it may need publication in a journal article. Costs for this phase are often hardest to predict, as it depends on the results of the work carried out, so often parts of this phase are costed as contingencies that may need to be used.

Appointing an Archaeologist

DCC does not hold an approved list of archaeologists, but instead suggest you consider using the British Archaeological Jobs and Resources list (at <http://www.bajr.org/RACSmapp/default.asp>) and/or Chartered Institute for Archaeologists list (at <http://www.archaeologists.net/ro>) to identify potential archaeologists. Similarly, DCC are unable to tell you who to choose, but can offer advice on things to consider, or attempt to answer any queries. However, much of the advice for appointing an Archaeologist would involve similar considerations as employing anyone else to do work for you – making sure it is clear what is, and isn't,

included in the cost (usually specified by a Written Scheme of Investigation – see below), being clear about when payment and work needs to take place, making sure the company you choose is a reputable one, and so on. You may find a leaflet produced by the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers helpful – <http://www.famearchaeology.co.uk/wpfb-file/fame-procurement-which-archaeologist-leaflet-pdf/>

Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) – this is a document that sets out what work needs to be carried out by a Contractor. A WSI ensures that the Developer, Planning Authority and the Contractor all know exactly what works will be needed, and ensures that the appropriate work required is carried out, to the right standard. It is usually prepared by the contractor, but should be approved by DCC (for which a fee is usually payable see <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2006/Development-management-advice> for charging details).

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