**Key Issues**

Waterman co-ordinated the EIA of the Mount Pleasant scheme and prepared an ES to accompany the planning applications.

As part of the EIA, a desk-based buried heritage (archaeology) assessment was undertaken. This included a review of information held by the Greater London Historic Environment Record (HER), Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, Islington Local History Centre, the British Postal Museum and Archive, National Monuments Record and previous ground investigation reports.

During the statutory consultation period, Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS) commented on the potential for palaeoenvironmental assets and Civil War related heritage assets (the Communication Line) on the site. As a result of the HER being updated following submission of the ES, the Communication Line was not previously identified during the review of other information sources. Owing to the potential for palaeoenvironmental (and other heritage) assets, Waterman concurred with GLAAS that the Mount Pleasant scheme has the potential to affect buried heritage assets. Within the ES it was concluded that mitigation measures could be secured by a condition on any planning permission. During post-submission consultation, it was agreed with GLAAS that this was acceptable for the Calthorpe Street part of the site, but that a pre-determination evaluation would be required for the Phoenix Place part of the site.

**Purpose of the project**

The aim of the project is to redevelop 3.53 hectares of underutilised land following the modernisation and rationalisation of Royal Mail Group's operations at Mount Pleasant.

The site straddles the administrative boundaries of the London Borough of Camden and the London Borough of Islington. The suitability of the site for mixed use redevelopment is acknowledged within the Mount Pleasant Supplementary Planning Document for the site and other local planning policies.

**Description of the project**

The site is separated into two areas by a road. The western part (the Phoenix Place site) is largely occupied by a surface car park and the eastern part (the Calthorpe Street site) is currently occupied by a basement used as a service yard for the adjacent Royal Mail Sorting Office. There are numerous major underground infrastructure features beneath the site, including Mail Rail tunnels and the Fleet River Sewer Branch.

The proposals comprise ten separate buildings accommodating a mix of uses comprising residential, retail, community and office. New basements are proposed across the site.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt

Following submission of the planning applications, GLAAS requested that pre-determination archaeological evaluations should be carried out, owing to the potential for the presence of palaeoenvironmental and Civil War related heritage assets. Through negotiations it was agreed that archaeological evaluation of the Calthorpe Street site could be secured through a planning condition. However, as requested by GLAAS, a pre-determination archaeological evaluation is currently being undertaken for the Phoenix Place site, focusing on the potential for the presence of palaeoenvironmental deposits associated with the River Fleet. Significant post submission consultation with GLAAS and English Heritage was needed to agree the scope and methodology of the pre-determination evaluation.

The principal lessons learnt are: (a) the need for early baseline studies to identify potential receptors/impacts, and (b) early consultation with statutory authorities to agree baseline findings and assessment methodology for the purposes of the EIA. The meeting with GLAAS also ensured that client interests were taken into account when defining pre-determination scope. In particular, Royal Mail operational requirements significantly constrain the area available for evaluation and hence the amount of information recoverable prior to the Phoenix Place site application being determined.

Lessons learnt cont. -

A simple lesson, but meeting face to face is always more productive and less time consuming than written correspondence.

For many EIAs the process is undertaken over a significant period of time, particularly for complex and high profile projects. In such cases baseline studies should be reviewed and updated to take account of any new information available since the original studies were undertaken. This will minimise the risk of new information becoming available during the consultation period and the associated delays incurred through post-submission consultation.

From a client perspective, identifying and informing statutory consultees of operational constraints on a site is an important consideration in defining assessment scope.

In combination, implementing the lessons summarised above should minimise delays and help ensure a more efficient route of a development proposal through the planning process.

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