

Site Finding: Wales – COVID-19 Lockdown



Covid-19 creates practical challenges for those seeking to identify and promote potential development sites, particularly in the residential sector. These difficulties sit alongside opportunities for well-resourced developers to take on new sites and projects. Lichfields can help identify opportunities for promotion and give realistic advice on the best route for securing an allocation and permission.

Lockdown challenges

- Conducting site visits
- Delay to local development plan timescales including examinations
- Ability to engage effectively with LPAs
- Economic downturn leads to lapsing of land options/promotion agreements

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Getting ahead

Once the lockdown begins to lift and the economy restarts the immediate concern will be how to release value from current land opportunities and find new sites that present good prospects in the medium to long term.

For current sites, the Covid-19 crisis means challenges for progressing promotion strategies – can on-site or traffic surveys be carried out as a preparation for planning applications? Will the timescales set out in updated delivery agreements present commercial difficulties? A clear planning strategy for the timely unlocking of those sites will be critical.

But looking ahead, the Welsh Government will undoubtedly look for the construction sector to help drive economic recovery and the crisis will present opportunities for those with resources to weather the storm. Will Covid-19 delays result in options lapsing or developers being unable to fulfil their promotion commitments? Will landowners/developers be looking for new joint venture partners? Will the downsizing of existing commercial activities mean new sites become available for development? Now is the time to take-stock and plant the seeds for future success.

How can Lichfields assist?

Clients regularly ask Lichfields to identify potential development opportunities for promotion through local development plans and planning applications and to provide the planning route map realising the potential. For those with current sites, we can prepare a feasibility study to re-evaluate its prospects and timescales in light of changes arising from the current situation.

For those on the lookout for new opportunities, we can prepare 'deep dive' reviews to unearth sites in individual authorities through to more strategic assessments identifying potential across regions and growth corridors. Drawing on our suite of spatial analytics tools, our services also include:

- Advising on the implication on site finding and subsequent promotion of the requirements within the new Development Plans Manual;
- Advising on the alternative routes for site promotion and the relationship between the emerging Strategic and Local Development Plans;
- Advising on opportunities to align site finding and promotion to wider economic strategies, such as for the city regions, and;
- GIS-based site finding.

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