



BACHY SOLETANCHE



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**What to consider  
when reviewing a  
piling tender submission**

# Sustainability



## What can the contractor offer in support of sustainability?

Sustainability – and specifically, reducing environmental impact – is top of mind for most companies nowadays. We know that for many, sustainability is an aspect considered at every stage of the project, from design to execution, so it is important to check whether the contractor's proposal aligns with your company's values and is offering a solution that minimises environmental impact.

Look out for carbon-saving initiatives like net-zero projects, a zero-carbon footprint or implementation of carbon management systems, including replacing traditional concrete with ultra-low carbon concrete.

In addition to adopting more low-carbon or more 'eco-friendly' materials, to ensure minimal environmental impact, it is vital that the contractor has looked into optimising solutions to reduce the number of materials used on the project in the first place.



Reducing the overall quantity of resources, carbon and waste on a project contributes to a more sustainable, and therefore more successful, scheme. Look out for what solutions the contractor is offering to address this, for example, opting for threaded or displacement piles instead of traditional piles or implementing a waste management system to responsibly dispose of environmentally toxic substances.

HIGH  
EMISSIONS

LOW  
EMISSIONS

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# Technical ability

## Does the contractor have experience of delivering similar projects?

This sounds like an obvious one, but it is also a variable that can easily be overlooked. The last thing you want is your project ending up in the hands of a company without the relevant experience, so it is worth the extra time now to ensure you have a contractor you can trust and who you are confident will complete the job to your satisfaction. There will always be obstacles, but a contractor with the right experience will be able to overcome these without major disruption to the programme.

This is the time to take a careful look at the case studies provided in the tender to find evidence of similar ground-engineering solutions the contractor has successfully delivered. A thoughtful submission will make it easy for you to find these by including relevant projects that emphasise the technical aspects your project requires.

## What are their design capabilities and technical expertise?

A tailored and expertly crafted design is the cornerstone of any successful project.

Can the contractor offer you the technical expertise you are looking for and meet the technical demands of your programme? When evaluating this, you need to ask yourself what your challenges are and how the contractor is overcoming them.

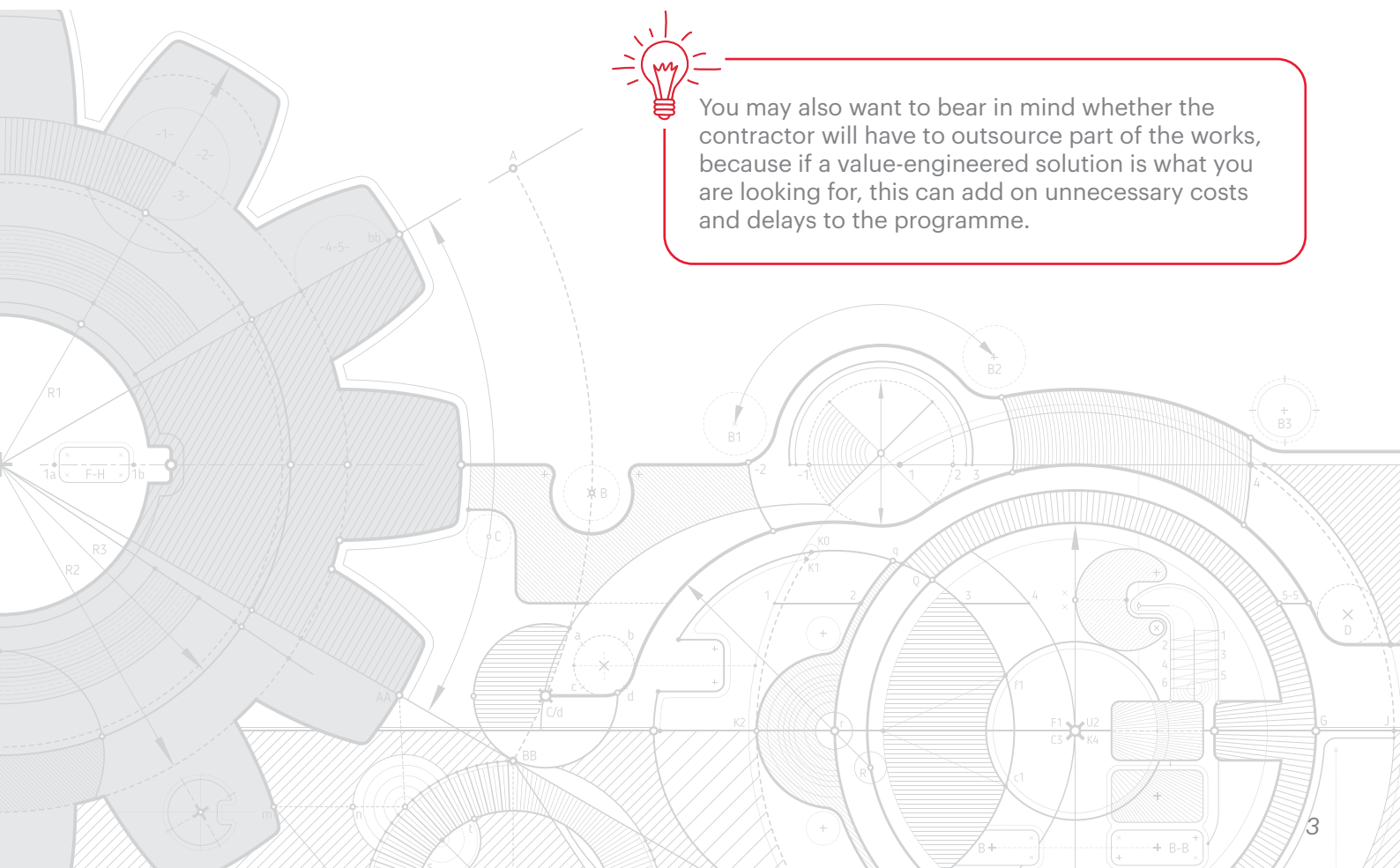
For this, it is helpful to focus on two aspects: Firstly, do you have confidence that the contractor can design your solution? Secondly, do they provide evidence of a technically difficult project they have completed?

Study the presentation of the proposed design and the solutions put forward. When a more technically challenging solution is required, e.g., pile verticality, the contractor should focus on this and home in on your primary concerns.

Pay particular attention to the contractors that can offer solutions their competitors cannot. Can they offer you a broad range of engineering solutions to meet all your needs or are they limited to a handful of techniques? Whether it is through their in-house expertise or through their sister companies, you want a contractor that offers what is right for the project, not what is right for themselves.



You may also want to bear in mind whether the contractor will have to outsource part of the works, because if a value-engineered solution is what you are looking for, this can add on unnecessary costs and delays to the programme.





# Resources

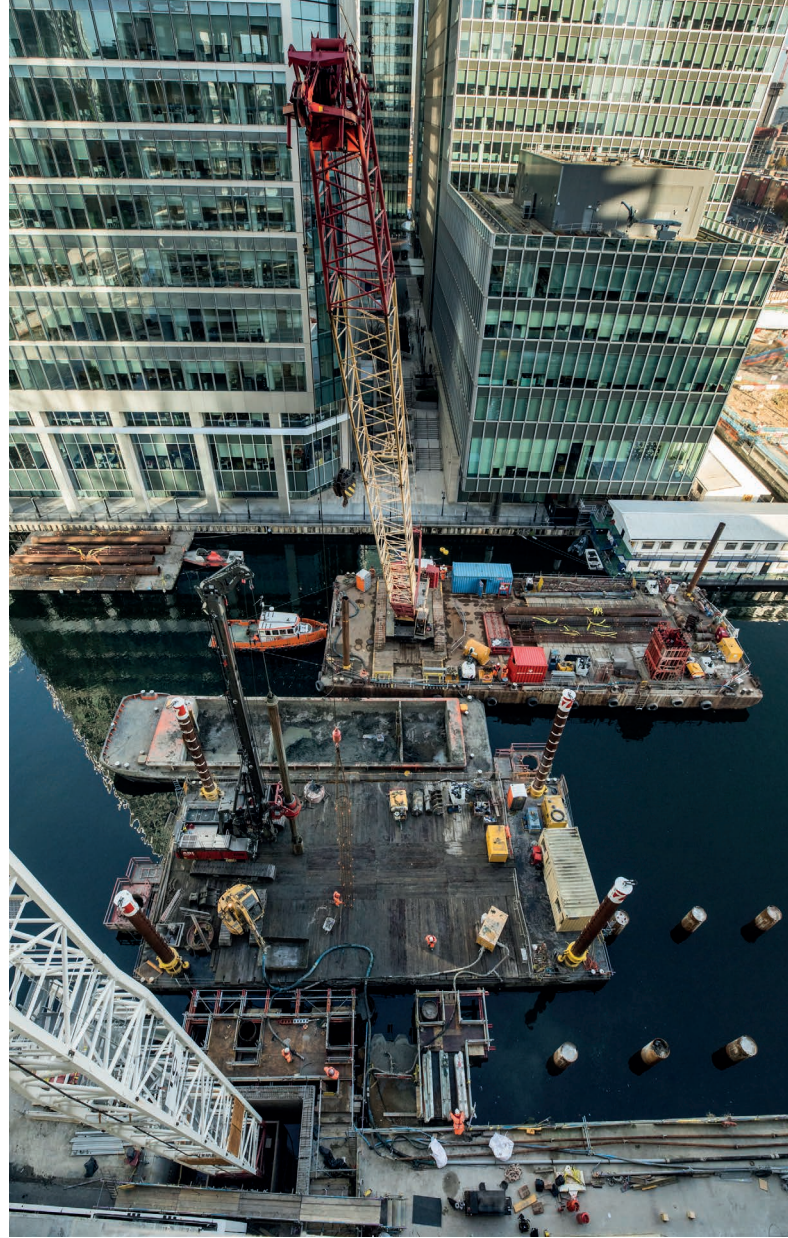
## What resource does the contractor have access to?

Put simply, if the contractor does not have sufficient resources or the most suitable resources, their ability to deliver the programme to your requirements will suffer.

Larger companies have a lot more resource to hand, including rigs and stronger teams that can complete the work. This is usually a key differentiator in having a contractor you can rely on to begin and finish work on time, and complete work to the expected standard.

Beyond just the number of resources, you want to ensure the contractor can also provide resources that are tailored to your project. Do they have suitably skilled personnel, and do they have a variety of plant to suit each section of the project?

Along with these essential resources, take note of any less-obvious resources they might offer that will add benefit, for instance, an in-house fabrication yard that can be used to manufacture equipment from scratch if any problems arise on site. They might also be able to offer additional services that would usually be requested in the attendances, such as attendant excavators, setting out guide walls, and wheel and road cleaning. These are all valuable additions to consider.



## Do they have the right team?

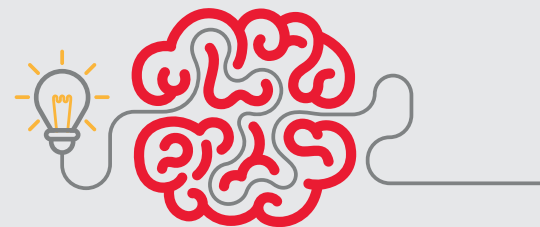
Collaboration is instrumental in achieving your vision, and if you want your project to go smoothly, you will need the right people for the job. In tenders for more extensive projects, the contractor should really be including the CVs – and ideally an organogram – of their team for you to review. Spend time on this stage to see if the employees' skill sets and experience fit the bill. Look out for what notable projects they have worked on and what technical expertise they bring to the table. This is vital in giving you the confidence that they will deliver.

# Solutions

## What scope of piling works are they offering?

Your programme will likely benefit from a broad range of piling works, as you want to make sure you use a tailored approach. From cased secant piling to restricted access piling and rotary displacement piling, you will want to ensure the contractor can offer the most suitable piling method for each section of work.

On top of this, it may also be necessary to consider whether the contractor can offer more than just the piling works. Can they go above and beyond what is expected? Some contractors can act as principal contractor, providing extras such as piling platform design and installation, pile attendance and muck away, demolition, pile trimming, site investigation and excavation – and some will even be able to do all of this in-house.



# Reliability

## Do you have confidence they will deliver the programme?

When delivering a project, you likely have a relatively short window to carry out work, so you need to be confident that whoever you have employed can meet the programme.



Whilst a tender is a representation of the contractor's offer, it is also about who they are as a company. This is not an element that will appear in the tender alone, but rather it is a judgement informed by taking a holistic approach to assessing the company, taking into account the many factors that affect your confidence in them. These could be things such as the company's reputation, their performance, their ethos and your relationship with them.

You can draw from what you know already about the company, but it is always worth doing your own research into the company by looking on their website or social media platforms.

Taking this comprehensive approach is instrumental in establishing whether the contractor is competent, trustworthy and can represent your company well whilst on site.

## Have they understood the project?

Whilst many contractors will simply focus on giving a price, a reliable contractor will go the extra mile to show they have understood what you are looking for.

A tender submission is an opportunity for the contractor to show they are speaking the same language as you and have recognised the project's needs. This might be shown through a summary of the scheme and an outlined scope of works that shows they know what you are looking for. They may also have included a section on logistics and visits with logistics drawings to help explain how they have understood the project.

Other positive signs that the contractor has understood the project include recognition given to sensitive working hours, security issues, constraints, ground conditions or predicted deflections.

## Does the contractor have financial backing?

To minimise risks on your project, it is paramount to ensure your contractor is financially secure. In the engineering sector, we know that unforeseen obstacles like underground services or ground contamination can sometimes mean extra costs. Make sure that the company you choose has financial support so that if anything does not go to plan, they will be able to cover the initial costs and continue with the scheme to completion.



Investing in a renowned, experienced and large firm that can withstand unforeseen obstacles and financial pressures helps you avoid running the risk of paying the price later down the line.

Similar to the previous point, this relies on what you already know about the contractor outside of the tender submission. What is their reputation in the industry? How large is the company – do they have a parent company or do they stand alone? What major projects have they previously completed?





# Price

## Has the contractor offered a value-engineered solution?

Price... let's be honest, this is probably the first thing you look for when reviewing a tender, is it not? We know how important this is for your business and so it would be naive not to include this. Whilst securing an affordable contract is crucial, it is important to get the balance right.

In addition to price, look out for a value-engineered solution – this is one that eliminates unnecessary costs, whilst improving quality and performance. A good value-engineered solution is also one that assesses alternative options to meet the design criteria and constraints. What alternative solutions can you see that the contractor has offered to your project?



When reviewing a submission, it may be tempting to simply opt for the cheapest offer. However, it is important to evaluate all the benefits a value-engineered solution can provide, beyond the piling price. For example, a value-engineered solution may bring valuable savings further down the line such as follow-on trades or alternative solutions that reduce programme time.



## Conclusion

The key to making an informed decision on which contractor to choose for your project is to check whether they have answered your specific doubts, offered a valuable and well-constructed solution, provided the technical expertise you are looking for and demonstrated that they have understood your project.

Whilst the bottom line may make a piling tender look appealing, it could be hiding potential challenges further down the line. Ultimately, you need to feel confident that the contractor will deliver the programme to your requirements. This confidence will come from both the details provided throughout the tender and from taking a holistic view of the company to consider whether they are reputable and trustworthy.

Taking the time to thoughtfully review the tender submissions in this way will be the most valuable investment you can make in your project.





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