



Ecological Impact Assessment

Project

Barrow Hospital

Client

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP)

Background

In anticipation of Barrow Hospital becoming surplus to requirement, AWP sought outline planning permission for mixed use redevelopment. In recognition that the site supports a nationally important lesser horseshoe bat roost (a European protected species), and that it lies in a geographically sensitive location, North Somerset Council determined that an EIA was required to inform the planning application.

Description

Barrow Hospital, two kilometres south of the urban edge of Bristol, comprises a network of institutional buildings set in some 80ha of broadleaved woodland (partially designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)) and pasture with areas of mown amenity grassland. Extensive field assessment was undertaken (Phase 1 habitat, badger, bat, dormouse and breeding bird surveys), followed by examination of all buildings and the underground ducting and by emergence and dawn surveys for bats. Seven species of bat were recorded, including a nationally important lesser horseshoe bat roost in the underground ducting system, approximately 62 other bat roosts of various types in hospital buildings, two substantial long-eared and five crevice-dwelling bat maternity roosts. As well as the bat interest, significant ecological value was found in semi-natural and ancient woodland in and adjacent to the site, together with small areas of species-rich grassland, at least two social groups of badgers and a diverse breeding bird assemblage.

Outline planning permission was granted in August 2005, requiring all of the site woodland, the majority of the species-rich grassland and habitats and features used by breeding birds to be retained when the site is redeveloped. Some of the underground ducting will also be retained and enhanced for lesser horseshoe bats, together with two new, purpose-built bat houses. Roosts for other bat species will be kept, either in situ or in alternative new roosts. Retention of key foraging habitat and flight paths, supported by sensitive lighting and a management plan, will help to ensure long term protection of retained habitats.

Client benefits

Detailed ecological assessment informed production of a realistic development masterplan for this very challenging site. The consent enabled AWP to dispose of the site in accordance with NHS strategy.