

# Importance of New Environmental Impact Assessment

## Summary

A new Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) has recently come into force, under which Local Planning Authorities will now be able to demand that an additional EIA be carried out before they grant full planning permission should they feel more information is needed to satisfy the EIA Directive. This means that a further Environmental Impact Assessment can be required for 'Reserved Matters' (detailed) applications, such as the most recent application for development of Area 2 of the Radstock Railway Land site by Norton Radstock Regeneration and Bellway Homes. Cam Valley Wildlife Group is arguing that a further EIA is required for NRR/Bellway application 08/02332/RES.

## Statement from Cam Valley Wildlife Group

Cam Valley Wildlife Group has not ascertained whether or not an EIA will be required for all Reserved Matters applications where an EIA was required for the Outline application. We take the view that in order to satisfy the Directive, whether or not this is the case, a further impact analysis is required in respect of 08 02332 RES in order to determine the effect of landscaping and lighting on protected species. We take the view that this matter has not been examined in the existing EIA. It has been assumed that mitigatory measures regarding minimising light spill will achieve a satisfactory outcome, rather in the same way that it was assumed that the mitigation for invertebrates and other fauna and flora would work. As the latter was disproved at the outline stage and the authority has acknowledged that the mitigation and compensation measures were insufficient, we take the view that it would be inappropriate for the authority to assume that those proposed regarding lighting would also be effective. As the details regarding lighting were reserved matters, it would not be reasonable to have expected objectors to determine a presumed impact. Despite the fact that the Ecological Mitigation, Management and Compensation plan was a matter for approval at the outline stage, we assume that because the lighting details were yet to be determined the impact could not be assessed at that stage. We take the view that this can and should now be done through an EIA for the Reserved Matters application. It is clear that the EIA for the outline application was insufficient to determine the impact that could have been determined were the application a full application rather than a hybrid application. We welcome the change regarding EIAs for its ability to plug up the loophole that allows developers to do an incomplete impact analysis in cases such as this.

There are a number of matters that we feel are pertinent to any decision regarding the need for an EIA for this Reserved Matters application:

- there was no analysis in the EIA for the outline application of the effect of lighting on bats, which would need to include light contour mapping and information regarding light tolerance, or any differentiation between bat species in this regard;
- greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, brown long-eared bats and myotis species using the site are light sensitive to varying degrees; there has been no analysis of the likely use of the site by these bats following development, or how they would continue to access roosts and the off-site mitigation and compensation areas, due to the lack of impact analysis regarding lighting in the EIA for the outline application and the failure to refer to research data/information;
- there is lack of clarity regarding the detail of landscaping matters (management of the features at the top of the cutting), which may impact on the connectivity of the on-site route between SACs for greater horseshoe bat - the management of the top of the cutting for invertebrates needs to be assessed regarding the impact on the use of this commuting route by this species.