

In March 2015, North Whiteley Consortium (NWC) submitted an outline planning application to Winchester City Council Local Planning Authority (LPA), for a development of up to 3500 homes and three schools. This was on land in close proximity to the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar sites, and also the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Here's how we've worked with the developer and local planning authority to secure the best possible outcomes for the environment and everyone involved.

The site and surroundings

The North Whiteley site is identified in Winchester Council's adopted Core Strategy, a key Local Development Framework document which sets out the type, location and timescale for development in a council area. The site is earmarked as a key strategic area in delivering the Council's housing targets.

The development could have significant environmental impacts on several areas of ecological and landscape interest. This needed to be taken in to consideration during the planning process and, with the SPA and SAC nearby, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the proposals might need to be undertaken by the LPA.

As well as the aforementioned protected sites, the proposals were in close proximity to nine Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation; several water courses, including The River Hamble (part of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA), and woodland areas to the east, including Botley Wood and Everett's and Mushes Copses Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Working to secure positive outcomes through DAS

REDACTED, from our area teams, with input from licensing colleagues, were involved with North Whiteley Consortium from the early stages of the planning proposal. **REDACTED** takes up the story:

"We sought to address a number of issues with the developer, through a series of DAS meetings and site visits. With the proposed development site including features including woodland, tree belts, meadows and grasslands, and the necessity to address impacts upon the Solent and Southampton Water SPA, we identified a 'win' early on in discussions. This led to the inclusion of almost 90 hectares of accessible green space in the development master plan, as a mix of on-site green infrastructure (GI) and a contribution to the Council's wider strategic solution.

"The central road to be created through the development site has been designed to allow larger areas of GI, with green links and buffers creating a coherent ecological network on site. Some green links are also providing dual benefits, as mitigation for impacts on protected species.

"During discussions, it became apparent that North Whiteley Consortium were keen to discuss licensing for protected species. With the support of our Area Manager, we were able to help North Whiteley Consortium access our licensing pre-submission screening service and resolve a number of areas of concern.

"Another key issue was the site being adjacent to the Botley Wood and Everett's and Mushes Copses SSSI, a large woodland area designated for its invertebrate interest, including around thirty species of breeding butterfly. We met with North Whiteley Consortium on site to discuss options to mitigate for the expected increased footfall from the new housing development and successfully agreed a package of measures to minimise the impact."

Seeing the benefits

Although the real 'outcomes' have yet to happen on the ground, we've helped NWC shape their plans to deliver the best possible results for the environment and the development. Understanding each other's aims from the outset helped us all to focus on the key issues and work together on solutions to overcome them.

REDACTED from North Whiteley Consortium, gave the following feedback on working with us: