

Havant Thicket Reservoir

HBC Application/24/00311 – Reserved matters Phase 3 - Embankment and Valve Tower

and

HBC Application/24/00312 – Section 73 – Changes to the Embankment

Comments on behalf of Havant Climate Alliance and Havant Friends of the Earth

We have several concerns and objections to the significant changes contained in these related applications. Planning permission should not be granted until these issues have been addressed.

1. THREAT TO THE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR EAST OF THE RESERVOIR.

The eastern embankment has been widened and moved further north. Can the footpath and vehicle track be accommodated without further tree and hedgerow loss? The essential wildlife corridor, between Havant Thicket and Staunton Country Park, is already very narrow along part of the east side. (It partly depends on an area of private land where its continuance as green space is not guaranteed). The previous design did not appear to meet the Natural England minimum width of 100 m. It now looks as though it could be severed at certain pinch-points. A more detailed landscape plan is needed to show the actual width of vegetation (especially trees and hedgerows) along the whole east side. Is there enough space to enhance the existing wildlife corridor with further planting?

2. THREAT TO THE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR WEST OF THE RESERVOIR.

The western embankment has been widened. It is not clear how the paths and southern access road will be accommodated, as well as the essential north – south wildlife corridor. This will be squashed between the water and the new development of Cabbagefield Row. We doubt that it will meet the Natural England minimum of 100 m. A more detailed landscape plan is needed to show the width of vegetation (especially trees and hedgerows) along the west side of the reservoir. Will there be space for additional tree planting east of the road to provide screening, and to enhance connectivity for wildlife?

3. VALVE TOWER

The original plan was for the Valve Tower to be located within the embankment core, so with the visible base above upper water levels. By moving it from the core to the inner embankment slope, it will mainly be surrounded by water, except when water levels are extremely low.

a) Health and Safety

This change presents risks to people living nearby in Leigh Park.

(Previously stated in our responses to the Discharge of Planning Conditions 4 and 26 of App/20/00990)

A tower out in the water may act as a lure to certain individuals who may be tempted to swim out to it. We know that reservoirs come with high risks due to deep cold water, strong currents and hidden obstacles. There may also be risks of people trying to wade out to it through mud at times of low water.

We think that the Valve Tower should remain in the core of the embankment, with the visible base above high water level, unless the engineering reasons for moving it are sufficiently sound (i.e. risk of weakening the embankment) for it to be moved.

b) Secondary Means of Access to Valve Tower

There will be additional risks if a Bridge/Secondary means of Access is built out to the tower. (A tunnel from the Control House will be the primary means of access). It is not clear that secondary means of access will be needed. But, however secure, it would act as an additional lure to individuals keen to overcome all barriers and dive off into the water.

We have said that planning applications for the Valve Tower and Secondary means of Access should be combined or submitted together, so that the full impact on public health and safety can be considered by a planning committee.

NB. If the Valve Tower must be moved to the embankment slope, it was suggested at a Stakeholder workshop, that a promontory of compacted clay, could be built out from the north of the embankment to the tower. This would remove its attraction to swimmers and divers.

c) Landscape impact

We have additional concerns about how a tower being placed out in the water will detract from the view, by making it look less like a natural body of water. We understand that the rails on top of the tower will be 1.8 m above the top of the embankment, and 2.8 m above top water mark.

4. CONTROL HOUSE

By moving this northwards with the embankment, the Control House will not be so effectively screened by Round Wood. Additional tree planting is needed in the gap to help with future screening, and to provide a biodiversity gain, which will help to mitigate for losses elsewhere.

5. LOSS OF WET GRASSLAND IN THE SOUTH WEST

By moving the embankment south here, there is less area available to preserve and re-establish wet grassland and priority rush pasture habitat, as originally planned. The LEMP of July 2024 does not provide for this to be adequately compensated elsewhere, or for the remaining area to be enhanced. Moving stockpiles of species rich rush pasture soils to the north-east corner of the reservoir will damage the existing wet grassland there. Also the north-east corner is not sufficiently wet to support rush pasture. Instead, the wet grassland in the north-east should be protected during construction. In the south-east corner contours which allow this area to be a natural wet bowl need to be maintained or restored. Drainage from the reservoir compensation channel needs to be adapted so that sufficient water enters the area. Additional areas of rush pasture habitat also need to be created elsewhere, in compensation for the area lost.

6. PUBLIC WALKING ROUTE AROUND RESERVOIR SITE.

Construction is expected to continue for another 5 years. At present it is not possible to walk the entire circumference of the site, on external footpaths i.e. it is necessary to walk some distance through Leigh Park to get between Staunton Country Park and Memory Park. A footpath south of the planned embankment, connecting the two, could create an interesting and attractive walking route for local people.

7. INCREASE IN CO2 FROM CONSTRUCTION

We were previously told that CO₂e emissions during construction would be reduced to 83,890 tonne CO₂e, compared to a higher estimate in 2020. This was due to greater use of the clay/fill material found on site. However the Environment Statement Addendum states that, because of the changes to the embankment, greater quantities of aggregates and sand will need to be imported, compared to quantities originally assessed, which will increase CO₂ emissions.