



The countryside charity
Hampshire

Winnall Community Centre
Garbett Road
Winchester
SO23 0NY

01962 841897
admin@cprehampshire.org.uk
cprehampshire.org.uk

CPRE Hampshire response to the Havant Thicket Reservoir Hybrid Application

Havant Borough Council & East Hampshire District Council

APP/20/00990 Hybrid Application – alternative reference PP-08891458

CPRE Hampshire are aware that this project has been a long time in the planning by Portsmouth Water (PW) and whilst we support in principle the creation of the reservoir at this site to store water for public use, we have significant concerns over the proposed loss and damage to areas of ancient woodland.

We welcome the cooperation of Southern Water (SW) with Portsmouth Water (PW) on this project, which has recently produced this “enhanced hybrid Havant Thicket Plan” which is part of the solution to the shortage of water being experienced by SW. This shortage results in the extraction from the fragile Rivers Itchen and Test in periods of drought. It is predicted, given the rainfall changes due to climate change in the South East, that drought permits will need to be sought every year to meet demand until SW provides its alternative sources as indicated in its WRMP. This has already happened in both 2019 and 2020 when permit applications were averted only by rainfall.

Drawing water from Havant Thicket will for the reasonable future avoid the need for solutions such as a desalination plant on the coast, outlined in the SW WRMP19 plan, with its consequential serious impact on both the landscape and seascape.

However, CPRE Hampshire does have significant concerns that as submitted, the application will lead to the loss of irreplaceable habitat from a number of sites of ancient woodland contrary to Paragraph 175c of the NPPF.

On balance we recognise that this is an important infrastructure project that will help to provide reliable water supplies whilst also creating new green leisure facilities for local communities, a new wetland area and will ease pressure on the SDNP as well as providing some relief of stress on the Rivers Itchen and Test which could be considered assets more unique to Hampshire than this area of ancient woodland.

Accordingly we support this project as a local solution to water shortage subject to the concerns outlined below over the loss of ancient woodland, we would want the Local Planning authorities to confirm that current proposals will be reviewed to ensure that with the exception of the areas of ancient woodland which are within the proposed flooded areas all possible measures are taken by



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the applicant to avoid further damage to other areas of ancient woodland with the associated loss of biodiversity.

Ancient Woodland

The planned flooded area removes much of the ancient woodland referred to by objectors. CPRE Hampshire very much regrets the loss and asks the local authorities considering the application to ask the applicant to review all planned activities which would lead to further damage.

We consider it essential that the remaining ancient woodland is subjected to the absolute minimum of disturbance during construction and into the future and is managed effectively and sensitively by skilled personnel in sufficient number.

We also note that some of the ancient woodland is to be replaced by wetland. This will be a useful addition, but it should be included in the site as well as, not instead of, the ancient woodland. Reviewing water levels could achieve this in the North East of the proposed reservoir. This too will need skilled management in perpetuity.

Visitor centre and access

The application includes plans for a visitor centre, car park and access roads. Damage to ancient woodland associated with these developments should be avoided.

Along with Natural England and the Forestry Commission we seek further clarification on the alternative routes and design considerations available for the access routes to the visitor centre so that it can be demonstrated that the loss of irreplaceable habitats has been kept to an absolute minimum.

The northern access road is routed along an existing woodland management access track through ancient woodland. The footprint of the existing track has been excluded from the calculated figures of ancient woodland loss given that part of the track is already present in this location. However, utilising this route as the main access track to the visitor centre and construction route will result in further ancient woodland loss, damage, and associated impacts. This is in addition to the loss associated with the footprint of the reservoir. We would ask the local authority to pursue alternative access options that would reduce harm to the ancient woodland.

The visitor centre is located next to the planned wetland to the NW of the reservoir and brings visitors and vehicles very close to the ancient woodland, the new and valuable wetland and the planned bird hide. Since this location is extremely sensitive, we would ask along with Friends of the Earth and the Woodland Trust, that other sites must be considered. We would suggest much nearer to the existing settled areas to the SE and SW of the reservoir.



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We agree with the Forestry Commission statement that the compensation package for the destruction of irreplaceable habitat or ancient woodland is insignificant and must be enhanced.

We are concerned that the area of replanting of broad-leaved woodland and subsequent reforestation by the Forestry Commission/ Forest England has been miss-described and may be damaged by increased access.

The Pipeline

The route is a long one and passes many sensitive locations. The three options will be carefully reviewed as decisions are made.

RAPID's statement may be relevant here: "We believe that there may be value in accelerating the pipeline construction and investigations of its alternative use until Havant Thicket reservoir is operational, as a potential mitigation measure for the section 20 commitments. The long pipeline route is potentially crossing through sensitive areas which would also benefit from joint regulation".

Accordingly, CPRE Hampshire supports this project subject to all feasible measures being taken to protect and avoid disturbance to ancient woodland area outside of the planned flooded area.

CPRE Hampshire

South Downs and Central Planning Group