

XXXXXXXXXX Response to Application APP/20/00990 Havant Thicket Reservoir

I am really pleased to see that the planning application for the Havant Thicket Reservoir has been submitted and that the applicant has committed to a minimum area for the retained wetland of 10ha. It is important that planning conditions are added to ensure that the new and enhanced habitats are created and managed to deliver a biodiversity net gain. I fully support the proposal for a reservoir on the Portsmouth Water land at Havant Thicket. I would encourage the LPA to support the application as a sustainable way of addressing water resource shortfalls in the area.

However, before the application is approved there are a number of key points that I believe should be addressed more robustly in the outline plans and supporting documents presented with the application in order to address previous stakeholder and community feedback, protect the local community and wildlife at the site. I would request that the LPA's ask for the outline plans be updated before approval is granted.

1.0 Key changes proposed to the outline plans;

1.1 Southern Access; Revise the design of the southern access road to a single lane road with passing places, as is proposed for the northern access. If the northern route is to be the main access for construction and visitor traffic and that is designed as a single lane road then there should be no reason to make the southern route a wider two way carriageway as is currently shown in the application. A single lane southern access with passing places will reduce traffic speed, provide more space for landscape planting and screening to protect the heritage views, reduce the visual impact and help maintain the rural character of the site, plus provide a more natural gateway experience and sense of place for those entering the site from the south.

1.2 Rat run; Preventing the creation of a rat run between Leigh Park and the A3(M) at Horndean by showing the indicative location of a barrier gate to separate the north and south access routes within the NW car park. This is not currently shown on the plans.

1.3 Boundary gates; Providing the indicative location of gates on both the north and south access roads to facilitate night time closure of the site, to minimise anti-social behaviour and protect the night time ecology of the site. This is not currently shown on the plans. There should also be a planning condition to require the site gates to be locked at night time.

1.4 Visitor centre location zone; Amend the 'Visitor Centre Location Zone' shown on the Outline Landscape Plan for the NW Corner to prevent the visitor centre being located within the wetland conservation area. Restricting the location zone to the NW shore only, to ensure that at the detailed design stage the visitor centre cannot be located within the wetland conservation area, where it would take up valuable wetland habitat space and cause significant disturbance to wildlife. It is not appropriate to create a wetland to deliver a biodiversity net gain, then put the honey pot location for visitors within it when that will clearly reduce its wildlife value.

1.5 Reducing disturbance to the wetland through intelligent design; Improving the indicative layout of facilities in the NW corner to create a more robust and future proof layout which minimises the risk of disturbance to the wetland. Including prohibiting the provision of a public access terrace on the east side of the visitor centre fronting on to the wetland where it is most likely to cause disturbance through noise, movement of people and litter.

1.6 Motorcycle control; A key concern constantly raised by residents and site users during the public consultation is the existing and future use of the site by motorcycles, which is a significant concern to many people. No motorcycle barriers are shown at the access points on the western side of the site. Indicative locations should be shown for horse friendly vehicle/ motorcycle barriers

to address this important health and safety issue. Consideration also needs to be given to how the northern access route will be fenced to prevent new opportunities being created for motorcycle (or traveller) access into the wood.

More detailed comments are set out in Section 2 to explain why these amendments to the planning application are necessary and what benefit they would bring.

Section 3 sets out other changes that I believe need to be made to the maps and documents supporting the planning application to make it more robust, providing clarity and reassurance as to what is to be provided at the detailed design stage before any permission for consent is granted.

2.0 Further detail on the proposed key amendments to the submitted plans

2.1 Southern Access – Only permitting a single lane road with passing places

The south access route does not need to be a wider 2 way carriageway road.

The planning application proposes two access routes into the NW corner of the reservoir site. The supporting documents to the application in a number of places confirm that the northern access route is to be used as the main access route for construction and will be the publicised access route for visitors to the recreational facilities during operation. While the southern route is to be a secondary access for local trips only from the adjacent residential areas. The northern access is shown on the plans and described in the supporting documents as a single track with passing places, yet surprisingly the southern route is shown as a wider 2 carriageway road.

If the southern route is not for HGV's during construction and will only take a smaller percentage of the operational visitor traffic why is it shown on the plans and described in ES Vol 4, A13, Section 4.14 as a wider 2 way carriageway? If a single lane is appropriate for the proposed busier northern route it must be acceptable for the southern access.

ES Vol 4, A13, Section 4.10 indicated that concerns expressed by the Local Highway Authority about the creation of a rat run were addressed by making these routes single access tracks with passing places to ensure low vehicle speeds and discourage a through route being created, but this is not what is shown in the application. Making the southern access a single lane with passing places would have significant advantages;

- It would improve health & safety as the traffic would have to slow down and use passing places. This is really important given the proposed use as a recreational site for older people and families. A wider route is not needed for walkers and cyclists as they can use the operational access track or existing bridleway alongside the proposed new southern access road.
- It would help to reduce the urbanisation of the site as there would be less tarmac, especially as in the south the new access and operational access road are immediately alongside each other, so will have a combined visual impact.
- It would help to maintain the rural character of the area, a key requirement of stakeholders.
- It would provide a more natural gateway experience for those entering the site from the south, enhancing the sense of place and rural nature of the site.
- It helps meet the HBC restriction within the Local Plan policy text for the reservoir site to restrict public vehicular access within the site.
- It would provide more space for landscape planting and screening to protect key views including the view from The Terrace at SCP and The Avenue Staircase View Point. Without adequate mature landscape planting cars will be visible in places along the southern access route from such vantage points.

- Help meet the design objectives set out in the Engineering & design Report (Pg 7) to maintain and integrate with the rural landscape character, develop soft engineering solutions, limiting structures and ancillary clutter. A wider road does not do this.
- Meeting the stated design objective to minimise whole life costs, as a narrower road would be cheaper to maintain in the long-term and reduce the use of materials
- The road construction would be a lot cheaper allowing more money to be used on other community facilities to be provided.
- The single track road would require less materials to be imported reducing the environmental impact and carbon footprint (key stated design objectives).
- Less construction time would be needed for a narrower road which would reduce the impact for local residents and recreational users.
- It would provide some reassurance to residents who were opposed to the southern route during the consultation, that this is not the main site access for construction and operation of the reservoir, but would just be for local people.

I propose that before the application is granted the LPA request the applicant update the proposal for the southern route to show a single lane road with passing places, to slow traffic, reduce the visual and environmental impact of the new road, plus provide a more natural gateway and sense of place.

Construction Traffic; It is far from clear in the material supporting the planning application what construction traffic will be allowed to use the southern access route via Warren Park. Some supporting documents refer to the northern route being the 'main route' to be used for construction traffic especially HGV's, yet in other places documents refer to both the north and south route being used for construction traffic to dilute the overall impact of traffic. For example; Eng & Design Report (2.5.2) states that both access options will be developed to spread the impact of the construction traffic and consequently reduce the impact on any one area, Design & Access Statement (pg. 22) says having two access routes doubles our options for construction traffic coming in and out of the site, (pg. 44) refers to alternating routes for construction traffic to relieve congestion. There are also references to construction workers being able to access the construction site compound from the southern route. It is not clear if this is just those arriving for work in cars, or would it include workers arriving in vans or trucks?

To protect the safety and amenity of the residents in Warren Park it is essential that the extent to which the southern access route can be used for construction is clarified and agreed with the LPA/ Local Highway Authority before the application is granted, to ensure the volume of construction traffic using the southern access is minimised to reduce the impact on local residents and the nearby school. The period of construction will extend over 9 years, the requirement for a Construction Traffic Management Plan should be included as a condition.

2.2 Preventing a rat run

Feedback from the public consultation and the Highway Authority has indicated that if two access routes were proposed action would be needed to prevent the routes being used as a rat run from Leigh Park to the A3(M) at Horndean. Nothing is shown within the carpark layout plans which would prevent the route being used as a rat run. I would have expected to have seen a gate or barrier shown separating the carpark into two areas, with a specific management decision needing to be taken to open the gate, only when the site is staffed and carpark demand dictates the need. Showing the provisional location for a gate on the application drawings would;

- Provide reassurance that the access routes cannot be used as a rat run.
- Provide an opportunity for art to be incorporated into the gate design to make it an attractive feature within the car park.

The Development Specification (Section 2.31) stated that; the detailed design of the car park, along with management arrangements at the access points and car park will ensure that the route

through the site is not used as a short cut. The management arrangements need to include a physical barrier in order to be effective.

I propose that before the planning application is granted the LPA request the applicant update the Outline Landscape Plan for the NW Corner to show the indicative location of a physical barrier to make it clear that the access cannot be used as a through route (rat run) for construction or visitor traffic. Disabled spaces should also be shown in the north and south side of the car park.

Note 1: ES Vol 4, A13, Section 4.10 refers to the Highway Authority concern about the creation of a rat run and says; taken on board by designing these routes as single access tracks with passing places to ensure low vehicle speeds and reduce the attractiveness of it as a through route. However, this is not correct as the southern access route is not shown as a single lane track with passing places.

Note 2: The indicative carpark layout currently only shows disabled spaces in the southern part of the car park, this could indicate that a barrier is not proposed. Disabled spaces will need to be shown in the south and north of the car park if an effective barrier is to be provided. If the barrier was to be left routinely open during the daytime the access road will be used as a rat run.

2.3 Boundary gates on the access routes;

The northern and southern access route drawings do not currently show provision of gates to enable the site to be closed at night to vehicle access. Barrier gates are an essential part of the site controls and are routinely provided at other country park sites such as Staunton Country Park and QE Country Park. Providing gates to prevent vehicle access at night is part of the biodiversity mitigation strategy relevant to protecting the woodland from disturbance at night. For example, to protect badgers from the risk of vehicle strikes, Section 4.3.2 of the Outline Biodiversity Mitigation and Strategy refers. The Engineering & Design report states that a key objective is to; Maximise opportunities for biodiversity in the design of the landscape and buildings and minimise and mitigate any conflict with wildlife through forward planning. This can be achieved by providing appropriate secure gates at the access points to restrict vehicular access to specified opening times.

I propose that before the planning application is granted the LPA request the applicant update the Landscape Key Plans, plus the north and south access route plans to show the indicative location of robust barrier gates on each access road, to reflect the stated need to provide them to prevent access at night and help to minimise the potential for anti-social behaviour at night.

I would propose that a planning condition be applied to any consent granted to require the site gates to be locked at night.

Note: This is especially important at this urban fringe site where measures need to be specifically built into the design and management to address the risks of anti-social behaviour.

2.4 Visitor Centre Location Zone

The location of the visitor centre is to be fixed and to be located within the 'Visitor Centre Location Zone' illustrated as a dashed line box extending a long way in to the retained wetland conservation area, as shown on the Outline Landscape Plan North West Corner. As chair of the wetland stakeholder sub-group set up to help develop the outline design for the wetland conservation area I did not support the location of the visitor centre extending into the wetland, and nor did other expert members of the sub-group. During the public consultation in May 2020 these experts fed back the following comments on the location of the visitor centre.

- A former Senior Ranger at Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve and Hook with Warsash Nature Reserve, with more than 30 years of experience developing and managing wetland habitats stated; "The current plan proposes putting the visitor centre on stilts within the retained wetland. The primary conservation area of the site. This seems contradictory in the extreme. To provide a wetland habitat and then put the honey-pot location in it is bizarre! The centre is where the greatest amount of disturbance will occur.

The highest numbers of visitors, the highest number of kids, the highest number of dogs. Why would you put that **in** the conservation zone? Of course, the centre needs to have a view over the water, but this can be achieved by setting the centre back on the shore. There will be a lot of water to look at. More detail on his comments can be found in Appendix A. These comments remain valid as the proposal for the visitor centre location and design concept has not changed in the planning application.

- The Hants & IOW Wildlife Trust had a very experienced wetland manager on the sub-group and their expert response stated “We would urge a location which maximises the area of the wetland which is undisturbed yet visually accessible. Sufficient space between the visitor centre and the observation hide would also enhance the experiences of all visitors. On balance we would suggest the visitor centre is located as far to the north west of the site as possible and not within the footprint of the wetland or the islands forming it.”

It is very disappointing that this expert feedback has not been taken on board when defining the Visitor Centre Location Zone in the planning submission. There is no reason that a much more restricted zone for the visitor centre along the north-west shore cannot be shown now on the outline application drawings. Because the shoreline edge of the reservoir in that area is already fixed by the existing topography (there is no embankment here, or need for any significant ground manipulation) and the top water level is already known and fixed at the 39.5m AOD contour within the application Scheme Parameters (Development Specification & Application Drawings, Table 2.2).

More detailed feedback on why I did not support a location for the visitor centre within the wetland conservation area is set out in my response to the May 2020 public consultation attached as Appendix B. The comments and concerns which remain most relevant to the current planning application because the proposal has not changed are highlighted in blue text. Key concerns relate to the loss of valuable wetland habitat below the footprint of the building, disturbance from people and dogs accessing and using the centre (noise and movement), litter blowing into the wetland from the proposed external areas, increased risk of bird strikes, increased risk of anti-social behaviour, plus importantly a lack of flexibility for future proofing.

Despite this feedback and similar concerns being expressed by the public in the consultation it is very worrying to see that the potential envelope for development of the visitor centre has now been confirmed as extending even further out into the conservation wetland than was shown in the illustrations during the public consultation. If this ‘Visitor Centre Location Zone’ is not changed on the outline plan and planning consent is granted then the applicant can apply at the detailed reserved matters stage to build the visitor centre even further out into the wetland than is currently shown indicatively on the plan and visualisations. All that will be fixed at this outline stage is the ‘location zone’ as shown by the dashed line and the scale of the building, thus where the LPA agree to put that line for the ‘location zone’ is really critical to minimising future disturbance of the wetland. I note that the Flood Risk Assessment Report (Section 9.18) already refers to the Visitor Centre being located within the wetland.

Locating the visitor centre within the retained wetland conservation area will reduce the wildlife value of the west end of the wetland. It is completely inappropriate to create a wetland to provide a biodiversity net gain and then reduce the value of the gain by choosing to site visitor facilities within it. Through better planning of the layout more can be done to design out predictable issues to ensure the wetland is the best it can be and the potential for disturbance is minimised.

It is important that before any consent is granted that the LPA request the applicant provide revised drawings with the ‘Visitor Centre Location Zone’ shown restricted to a narrow strip along the NW shore, not extending out into the wetland. This is needed to minimise disturbance to the wetland conservation area from this visitor hotspot and to keep the visitor centre away from the education hide, otherwise disturbance from people using the visitor centre will ensure there is very little to see and interpret from the education hide.

2.5 Reducing disturbance to the wetland through intelligent design

In various places the supporting documents refer to environment being at the heart of the design for the reservoir and I believe it has been for most elements, but unfortunately this is not the case for the visitor centre (VC). Much more can be done through intelligent layout and design to minimise the impact of the visitor hub in the north-west corner on the wetland conservation area. Section 2.6.10 of the Eng & Design report acknowledged that; "To maximise the visitor experience the centre is positioned in the water and surrounded by the wetland environment." With environment at the heart of the design the priority should be protection of the wetland from disturbance, not the visitor experience, as great views of the water can be achieved without placing the VC in the wetland.

The design concept for the visitor centre currently set out in various supporting documents, notably the Design & Access Statement needs to be radically revised to put reducing disturbance of the wetland and maintaining the rural and heritage character of the area at the heart of the design. This should include;

- Rethinking the location and relationship of space to other facilities proposed around the visitor centre including the island location, external terrace, picnic area and play area. For example; Figure 6.15 connectivity requirements for the visitor centre shows a need to have a connection between the café and play area, but this is not then shown on the NW corner drawing landscape plan.
- Reducing the extent of the floor to ceiling glazing to what is necessary to provide views.
- Selecting local materials that are more in keeping with the local character of the area, such as brick and flint (e.g. buildings in Rowlands Caste, and The Oaks). Flint is included in the indicative palette but is not shown in the visualisations. The cladding shown in the palette does not look appropriate. Historically there were clay pits on the site for brick making and brick would thus be a very appropriate and more robust material to utilise.
- Ensuring the design and materials selected are more robust in this challenging urban fringe setting (see Appendix B).

It is important to ensure that public access is carefully manipulated and controlled through intelligent design of the layout from the start so that disturbance is kept to a minimum.

Terrace; There is no need to locate the terrace over the wetland where it will increase the area over which people cause disturbance right into the conservation wetland. An external terrace should not be located on the east side of the VC, instead the terrace to provide the extra 50 peak time seats for the cafe should be located on the south side of the VC adjacent to the picnic area to help minimise the area of maximum people disturbance adjacent to the wetland conservation area. This will also ensure that there are good views from inside the visitor centre / café over the wetland, without the view being obstructed by people and tables on the terrace. This will help to minimise disturbance in winter when the wetland is likely to be busiest for birds, as people can stay inside the VC to watch them from behind the glass, reducing their likely impact on the birds. The LPA should prohibit the provision of an external terrace on the east side of the visitor centre to minimise disturbance to the wetland conservation area.

Island design; Reconsidering the island design which makes future proofing for potential expansion, provision of utilities and emergency access more challenging. An island location makes the building more difficult to service and replenish supplies to the café, shop and office, and to remove equipment and rubbish, requiring service vehicles to travel right down to the water's edge, which would not be necessary if the building was located back on the water's edge. I recently visited the Attenborough Centre near Nottingham which has an island location for the visitor centre. I asked the manager who had been there for a long time if he had the choice now between an island location and a water edge location for a visitor centre what would he prefer. He said a water edge (not island location) as it is more flexible and gives you space to expand and do different things. A flexible space with scope for future expansion was a key thing that members of the stakeholder group have repeatedly indicated should be a fundamental part of the design of the visitor centre. As a minimum the ability to add a cell/pod for future expansion of facilities should be stated as part of the outline design criteria. This is not currently the case.

Buildings to be in keeping with the rural the character; The supporting documents suggest that the concept design shown is “imbedded in the landscape” yet the indicative drawing visualisation shown in Figure 6.16 is completely at odds with the landscape. The tall glass dominated building shown is not appropriate and would be highly visible from heritage view points such as the Terrace at SCP and from The Avenue view point. More effort needs to be made to ensure the design is imbedded in the woodland landscape and does not stand out like a Tesco’s superstore frontage. In my view the current concept design urbanises the site and a height for the building of 10m is too high, unless it is a hipped roof. Having a hipped roof would provide a roof void into which plant and flues can be hidden (e.g. ventilation plant) and is likely to be less accessible for anti-social behaviour. My concern is that any form of flat or grassed roof is more likely to present an accessible challenge to vandals.

Preventing access to the wetland for people and dogs; This needs to be an intrinsic part of the base design. It is imperative that adequate screening is in place before public access begins and that there are adequate physical barriers to prevent access by people and dogs to key features such as the wetland and wetland retaining structure. This will require early planting to enable vegetation (trees and hedges) to establish in the NW and NE of the site. Mesh can be added within a post and rail or hedge barrier to provide a more attractive solution.

Further feedback is made in Section 3 on specific issues that need further consideration including comments on future proofing, bird hide screening, buffer planting and mesh fencing. A specific area for controlled dog access to the water should be provided and shown indicatively in the vicinity of the proposed slipway, away from the retained wetland.

Further feedback on these design elements is also set out in my response to the May 2020 public consultation attached as Appendix B, with the most relevant information highlighted in blue text for ease of reference.

2.6 Motor cycle control

A key concern constantly raised by residents and site users during the public consultation is the existing and future use of the site by motorcycles, which is a significant concern to many people on both sides of the reservoir site, as well as recreational site users. No motorcycle barriers are shown / labelled at the access points on the western side of the site (e.g. at the bridleway entrance NE of Swanmore Road). A horse friendly vehicle barrier gate is shown in the east at Rowlands Castle on the landscape plan for Gipsies Plain.

I propose that before the application is granted the LPA request the applicant update the Landscape Key Plans to show where they propose to locate horse friendly vehicle/ motorcycle barriers to address this important health and safety issue. As a minimum indicative locations should be shown.

Careful consideration also needs to be given to how the northern access route will be fenced to prevent new opportunities being created for motorcycle (or traveller) access into the Havant Thicket woodland.

Can a planning condition require details to be submitted, approved and the barriers & fences be maintained to prevent motorcycle access?

3.0 Other comments & proposed amendments to the submitted plans / proposals

3.1 Creation and enhancement of habitats including future management;

There is currently very little detail available on the future plans for habitat creation and enhancement on site and off site, but the outline concepts and total planned area described in the Outline Biodiversity Mitigation and Compensation Strategy and summarised in the Appendix 4 tables look very good. The proposals for habitat enhancements at Southleigh Forest to restore deciduous woodland, the creation of new pasture woodland and lowland meadow habitat off site in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust are very positive and need to be completed on farmland as close to the site as possible.

I support the proposal for a biodiversity capital grant scheme to allow off site habitat and species compensation to take place where this is not practical on site. For example, creating grassland habitats to support breeding skylark. However, I was surprised that there is currently no indication provided as to the value of that grant scheme. It is important that the grants are targeted to species and habitats to be lost and awarded to appropriate schemes as locally as practical to the site, as described in ES Vol 2, Chapter 9, Section 9.398. However, the value of the grant scheme and how long it will run for to provide the long-term benefits must be agreed with Natural England and the LPA before planning permission is granted, to ensure an appropriate off-set and net gain is guaranteed to be delivered.

It is important that planning conditions are added to ensure that the new and enhanced habitats are created in an appropriate timeframe and managed to deliver a biodiversity net gain in the short and long-term. I anticipated that the future creation and management of habitats within the new tripartite country park and at Southleigh Forest would be guided by an expert panel approved by the LPA, as I recognise that the plan will need to be flexible to work with natural changes in habitats over time. Portsmouth Water indicated on a recent zoom call that a Memorandum of Understanding had been agreed and signed with both Forestry England and Hampshire County Council who run Staunton Country Park, but a copy of this agreement has not been provided as part of the supplementary information with the planning application.

When the LPA apply the conditions for the submission and approval of a detailed;

- Biodiversity Mitigation & Compensation Strategy
- Future recreational and environmental management plan

Can the LPA condition or make it clear in notes on a condition that there be an expert panel created to guide the development of any plans approved by the LPA which includes regulatory and independent people with appropriate knowledge and experience. This will ensure that commercial considerations cannot override the management and site controls that need to be put in place to create the best habitats and biodiversity net gain possible in the short and long-term.

3.2 Relocation of amphibians from Upper Lake; The Outline Mitigation & Compensation Strategy should be updated to make it explicitly clear that there should be a specific project to move and relocate the population of newts and frogs present in Upper Lake to suitable retained habitat at an appropriate time of year. Portsmouth Water has previously assured stakeholders and the public that this action would be taken and this is currently missing from the strategy.

ES Chapter 9, page 74, Section 9.522 confirms that whilst not subject to specific protection, the population of more common amphibians, especially palmate newt, in the Upper Lake will be translocated away from the development footprint using a capture and translocate exercise. It goes on to detail how this will be achieved during the spring breeding season to enable the greatest number of animals to be rescued.

The Outline Environmental Management Plan should also be updated on page 21, row B31, to make it explicitly clear that there should be a specific task programmed to move and relocate the population of newts and frogs present in Upper Lake to suitable retained habitat at an appropriate time of year, before construction commences in that area.

3.3 Future proofing for water sports training; Key feedback from stakeholders (including those from the local community) over the past year has emphasised the need to ensure that the scheme is future proofed to allow flexibility for additional activities or infrastructure to be added at a later date. (This was described as 2+ during the stakeholder workshop) While I acknowledge that Portsmouth Water is not a water sports provider and no one has come forward offering to provide educational sail or canoe training, I believe that the opportunity must be kept open to provide this option at a later date by making the design layout future proof. This needs to be considered further at the detailed design submission stage including;

- Providing a layout for the visitor centre that could readily accommodate a future extension (or pod addition) for additional facilities such as showers & changing rooms, as strongly recommended by other water industry experts who operate reservoirs. The current layout illustrated for the visitor centre is not conducive to this.
- Ensuring that utility services and drainage have the capacity to accommodate a greater capacity than the initial building size.
- Providing a slipway that is designed in such a way that it can accommodate potential future restricted recreational use as well as the planned operational use by Portsmouth Water.

If it can be shown in the future that such uses could be delivered in a way that does not impact the conservation wetland area, it is important that the opportunities that the sheltered body of water to be created could provide remain a potential option in the future for activities such as educational water use, or more specialist low impact activities that are not available elsewhere in the area.

Note: I fully understand why open public access to the water for recreation is not appropriate in order to protect the conservation value of the site, prevent deterioration in water quality especially from invasive species, and due to health & safety concerns.

3.4 Angling; Provision for fishing is no longer shown on the Outline Master Plan. Fish will be present in the reservoir with time and it is inevitable that people will fish there given the open public access available at the site. Therefore it would be better to provide designated areas away from the conservation wetland where this activity could be accommodated once fish become established. As has been found by the rangers at Staunton Country Park fishing can be used as a good and effective way of engaging with the local community, especially the youth. In my view it would be better to make some provision for this activity, as this will aid control of unauthorised use and allow anyone found fishing in the conservation area to be directed to a more appropriate location. The provision could be phased in to give time for fish to have become established.

3.5 Wetland view points; I fully support the inclusion of birdwatching view points along the northern shore of the wetland, which are accessed through dedicated and gated/ fenced paths. It is not currently clear if the locations are being fixed within the application documents. The locations shown on the Outline Masterplan and in Figure 6.26 of the Design & Access Statement look entirely appropriate using existing tracks to provide good views into each of the wetland compartments, it would be helpful if these could be confirmed as preferred indicative locations to ensure that there is no need for new path routes to be cut through the woodland. However, the location of the middle binocular symbol shown on the Key Plans is shown in a different place on the east side of compartment 4. If it was to be located there both sides of compartment 4 would be subject to human disturbance and there would be no visibility into compartment 2 and 3. It is better to locate it at the junction of compartment 2 and 3. The applicant has confirmed to me that this is an error. The key plan view point symbol locations should be updated on the key plan drawings to

be consistent with the Outline Masterplan drawing to ensure there is no ambiguity as to the preferred indicative location.

The layout and construction of the viewpoints will be subject to detailed design, but the path approach must be well screened and sensitively designed to allow access for all abilities, while minimising the risk of disturbance to the wetland. It is important that it is clear in the programme that screening planting for the view points is undertaken early to ensure it is well established before the view points are to be open to the public.

3.6 Protection of sensitive areas to prohibit human & dog access; Further consideration needs to be given to the location of fencing (with mesh) and barriers to prevent disturbance of the higher value conservation areas. While some fencing is indicated in the NW corner to protect the wetland conservation area it is stated on the key that this is a balustrade or post and rail fencing, it is not clear that this will include a mesh or bar width able to keep dogs and children out of the sensitive habitats.

Dog proof fencing or a barrier to access needs to also be included along the south side of the existing east to west FE main gravel track in Havant Thicket, which is linked to the fencing that will protect the dedicated paths down to the wetland. This is necessary to stop people and dogs from accessing the north shore of the wetland through the woodland, and to provide a quiet area of woodland free from recreational pressures adjacent to the wetland, to maximise the area of undisturbed habitat for wildlife adjacent to the wetland conservation area. The existing track side ditch does not provide a robust barrier, especially in the summer when visitor pressure will be greatest and the ditch is dry.

Note: As indicated in 2.5 above a dedicated area for dog access to the water should be provided away from the wetland conservation area.

3.7 Outline Landscape Plan NW Corner - queries

a) The dark green strip along the water's edge does not seem to be on the key. I assume this depicts a managed hedge incorporating a post and rail fence? This is a key feature which will help to minimise disturbance to the wetland in the area of the visitor hub. For clarity I propose that the feature be added to the plan key.

b) The proposed post and rail fence shown separating the visitor hub from the wetland / reservoir in the NW corner must incorporate a mesh (as indicated above) to enhance health & safety, plus stop dog access? This is not currently specified on the key? I propose that the inclusion of mesh is added to the key for the fence?

Note: The bar width of the balustrade fence shown also needs to be designed to prevent child and dog access to the water.

c) The outline plan should be updated to show that the hedge & fence does connect right up to the south side of the bird hide. Currently the plan shows a gap.

d) The key is unclear as to what the buffer planting along the west edge of the wetland is and I did not find any detail in the supporting landscape documents. Will it be trees? The buffer planting needs to be high enough and dense enough to screen the public using the NW corner from birds using the wetland to minimise disturbance. The applicant should be asked to provide further information to show that the planting will achieve this and be planted early enough in the programme to have a chance to establish before the site is opened to the public. Fencing needs to be shown extending around the buffer planting to keep people and dogs out of the buffer planting and well away from the wetland conservation area?

e) Boardwalks; Page 52 of the Design & Access Statement refers in the family section to boardwalks along the wetland edge where this can be achieved without causing disturbance. Page 55 (6.92) to a boardwalk through natural wetland planting. A boardwalk for visitor access would not be appropriate within the main wetland conservation area. The applicant should be asked to confirm in the supporting information that this would only apply to a boardwalk on the creek between the car park and the visitor centre and not be in the main retained wetland?

f) The bin store is located too far from the visitor centre? Based on experience elsewhere it will need to be closer to the visitor centre to be functionally practical.

Note: Section 2.6.15 of the Engineering & Design Report acknowledges that rubbish will have to be moved each day using a small utility vehicle to the rubbish store in the car park. This is a significant operational and H&S issue which intelligent design should ensure is designed out.

g) Emergency vehicle access is only provided to a turning head close to the visitor centre. Vehicles cannot get directly to the visitor centre, emergency personnel will have to negotiate the bridge and terrace decking. (Engineering & Design Report, 2.6.16). The detailed design needs to give more consideration to emergency vehicle access to the visitor centre.

h) ES Vol 3 visualisations has a post construction visualisation of view point 9 in the NW corner of the main reservoir site. The carpark roads and parking spaces appear to be shown as tarmac. Whereas the Outline Landscape Plan for the NW Corner indicated the car park bays will be compacted gravel, which I understand from the applicant is correct. Clarification should be provided in the application on which is correct so that there is more clarity on what is proposed, ideally the visualisation for view point 9 would be updated, to avoid any confusion.

3.8 Landscape screening along the southern access route; The plans are not currently clear that landscape screening such as hedgerows will be needed along the east side of the southern access route at the entrance on to the site and where there is no embankment to screen the access road and traffic from the wider views (including views of heritage significance) in order to maintain the rural character and minimise urbanisation of the site.

If they are illustrated on the Drg.HTR ATK AR RE DR D-0005 for the southern access route it is not clear because they are not shown on the key.

I propose that the applicant be asked to include the landscape screening on the access route drawing and include more detail on the key to provide reassurance that adequate screening will be provided and maintained to ensure that vehicles are not visible from The Terrace at SCP, nor The Avenue Staircase View Point.

Note: The scale of the key plans (landscape) may not be sufficient to show this detail, but a text label and arrows with a description of what is to be provided could be added to refer to the landscape screening along the southern access road to provide reassurance on this.

3.9 Education Hide; I fully support the proposal for an education hide in the NW corner. There is very little information on the design concept for this building. The education bird hide must be very carefully designed to optimise its use for education and bird watching, while minimising the risk of out of hours anti-social behaviour and vandalism in this urban fringe setting. Experience at other sites has shown that hides at night can attract anti-social behaviour including drug use. The proposal to have an entrance lobby area represents good practice in design. An ideal design would be to create more of a buried bunker concept with robust landscape screening on the approach. More like what is visualised in Figure 6.18 of the Design & Access Statement for the visitor centre, minimising the faces available for graffiti. The entrance and exposed viewing eastern frontage could be protected at night with shutters, but during the day these would be raised so the design can blend in better to the exiting landscape. A wooden construction, as appears to be shown in Figure 6.20 of the Design & Access Statement is very unlikely to survive in this urban fringe setting, based on extensive experience at other sites where wooden hides have been set on fire. The design concept and palette of materials needs to be updated to reflect a more robust design.

There is currently a discrepancy in the scale of the education hide building which needs to be resolved before consent is granted. The NW area landscape drawing label gives the area as 10m x 20m, whereas the Design & Access statement at Section 6.64 refers to 9m x 20m.

3.10 Lighting; The Development Specification (pg 20) refers to sympathetic lighting to be provided to routes and key facilities. In various places the documents refer to only task related lighting to the visitor centre and car park. To protect the night time ecology and rural character of the site and to prevent urbanisation of the site the amount of lighting must be kept to the absolute minimum needed for health & safety reasons. It must also be sensitively designed to minimise impact on ecology. A planning condition should be included to require the submission and approval of a detailed scheme for installation and maintenance of any lighting which needs to be provided to protect the ecology and rural character of the site.

3.11 Eastern routes merger zone; There is a critical point on the eastern site boundary roughly in the vicinity of where the existing bridleway enters the site where there will be a junction between;

- Existing perimeter path south from the FE carpark (a multi-user route)
- Existing perimeter path north from the Rowlands Castle roundabout at Manor Lodge Rd
- The existing bridleway west from Manor Lodge Road
- The new operational access track at the base of the embankment (to be a multi-user route)
- The new embankment crest road where it leaves the eastern embankment (to be used by operational vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians)

The supporting documents describe the need for a vehicle turning head for operational vehicles to turn at this point to return to the west. It is not clear how this multi-user junction which will need to accommodate people of all ages and abilities, cyclists, horse riders and operational vehicles will be designed safely in what is a limited space.

I propose that before the application is determined that the applicant be asked to revise the orientation of the Outline landscape Plan Gipsies Plain to illustrate that this key intersection can be provided safely.

3.12 Permissive bridleway in the east; I support the new route for the diversion of the bridleway to the south of the reservoir embankment and along Cedar Drive to provide a safer route for horse riders to access the site. On the Outline Masterplan and Key Plan 1 the section of the new operational access track in the east is shown as a pink dashed line. The key indicated that this meant it is a temporary bridleway diversion which will be reinstated to 'permissive path access'. It is not clear what this means? Will horse riders still be able to use the dashed pink line section of the operational access track on a permissive basis once the full diversion of the main bridleway is complete?

The local horse riders representative (SM) indicated that a safe route for horse riders needed to be provided from Cedar Drive to the existing bridleway entrance so that FE permit holders using Havant Thicket can get safely from Rowlands Castle into the Havant Thicket woodland trails. The perimeter path around the boundary in front of the Manor Lodge Road properties is too narrow for this to be safe and has blind bends.

I recommend that the LPA ensure there is clarity that the new operational access track east of the embankment (currently shown as a pink dashed line) will continue to be available as a permissive route for horse riders. It is an essential link if a permissive circular route around the reservoir is to be provided with the support of Forestry England.

3.13 New path in the south-west; The Outline Plan and Key Plan 2 show a new path from where the Riders Lane Stream crosses the southern site boundary to the embankment. The path will pass through an area of land that is already wet in winter as it is below the spring line where water flows from Gammon Hill down to the stream. The proposal is to make the ground even wetter in this area as a part of the Outline Mitigation & Compensation Strategy to create purple moor grass priority habitat (see Map 7). This will make the construction of a new path very difficult, unless it is constructed as a boardwalk. There would be a concern that a boardwalk in this area may not survive anti-social behaviour. Consideration should be given to a different route on dryer ground

such as on the east side of the stream, where the ground rises more quickly and is not impacted by the natural spring flow.

3.14 Outside education space; An open learning space is referred to in the Design & Access Statement (Pg. 69, 9.14) and the Development Specification page 20 refers to an educational/community space with a separate outdoor area. There does not seem to be an allocated area for this on the NW area outline plan? (except for the decking/pond dipping area) Provision of a fenced outdoor learning space has been recommended by many people who run similar reservoir and country park sites.

- Will the LPA require an indicative 'education area' to be included on the outline plans?

3.15 Error in location of an access path shown on Vehicle Access Route South map;

Drg.HTR ATK AR RE DR D-0005 showing the route of the southern access route shows a track or path route on to the reservoir site to the west of the new junction on Swanmore Road through the northern block of the existing trapezoid shaped woodland. This would require removal of trees and has previously been confirmed as an error by Atkins, when they indicated that the path should be shown to align with where the existing site field gate is, where there is no woodland.

I propose that the LPA request the applicant update Drg.HTR ATK AR RE DR D-0005 to show the correct information for the access points from Swanmore Road before permission is granted.

3.16 Existing permissive access points not shown in the SW; The existing permissive pedestrian kissing gate access points off Swanmore Road, Well Meadow and near Winterslow Drive in the SW of the reservoir site are not shown on Key Plan 2, nor are they described in the Development Specification at 2.32, or the Design and Access Statement at 6.83. I propose that the LPA seek clarification that these existing permissive pedestrian access routes will be retained and ask the applicant to add the existing four kissing gate access points to Key Plan 2 to make it clear that they will be retained.

Note: The kissing gates were initially put in by Portsmouth Water to reflect access points where the perimeter fence was regularly vandalised to create an access by local people. The routes are well used by local residents, especially dog walkers. If the kissing gates are not retained it is likely that the boundary fence will be regularly breached at these locations again.

3.17 Hedges missing on Gipsies Plain Outline Landscape Plan; The Gipsies Plain plan shows the Phase 1 tree planting that was completed in advance of the planning application. It does not show the new hedgerow planted around the perimeter of the field. The plan should be updated to show this hedgerow as part of the landscaping.

Note: the hedgerow planting was approved by the LPA's as part of the Phase 1 advanced planting works to improve habitat connectivity.

ES Vol 3 shows the post construction visualisation of View Point 5A. The new hedgerows (tree guards visible) on either side of the gate are not shown as growing in the year 1 and 15 visualisation. The hedgerow trees are growing well here and are about 1.2m high already. The visualisation should be updated to show the growth of the new hedgerows.

3.18 Re-use fossiliferous limestone material on site; I fully support the proposal to re-use as much of the material excavated during construction of the reservoir as possible. During the site investigation some of the exploratory holes encountered a hard band of fossiliferous limestone material of variable thickness. I recommend that when this material is removed that there be a requirement to store it on site and find a good use for it. For example, it could be used in the construction of the wetland view point screen walls, or other walls, seats and planters to add interest and a local connection. The fossils present will provide interest for education, interpretation and as a talking point for visitors to the site.

3.19 Linking to a safe recreational access from Horndean; During public consultation the community at Horndean asked for a safe path/ cycleway into Havant Thicket from Horndean east of the A3(M), as the B2149 was not considered safe by the community for recreational use. While the applicant does not own the land to deliver this, I understood that EHDC had progressed discussions with the LEOH developer to create a new recreational route.

Can the LPA request that the applicant show a preferred indicative location for the entry of this new link on Key Plan 3?

Note: Limiting the number and location of links to the Land East of Horndean development is important to reduce the impact of recreational access in Havant Thicket on ecology. Therefore, only one access point should be shown.

3.20 Re-use of woodland soils along the northern access route; The Development Specification page 20 referred to; Where practical, ancient woodland soil arisings from loss elsewhere will be used to form the northern access road embankment slopes.

It is important to note that the detailed vegetation survey identified that there were some areas of acid grassland along the existing northern access track. The botanist noted that this habitat is very uncommon in Hampshire. The areas were relatively small so were not plotted in detail. These areas would need to be identified by a botanist, marked out on site and avoided during the replacement of woodland soils in order to protect this uncommon acid grassland habitat. Can the applicant be asked to note this somewhere in the documents supporting the planning application so that it is does not get forgotten once the contractor is appointed to do the work?

3.21 Use of art in reservoir embankment pipework screens; I fully support the proposal to use incorporate art into the infrastructure and building design, as well as its incorporation into street furniture such as seats, signage and cycle racks. When the reservoir is drawn down the large inlet / outlet pipes will be exposed in the southwest inner face of the embankment close to the control house. I would recommend that the LPA specifically ask that art be incorporated into the design of the pipe screen grids to make them a feature of interest when the reservoir is drawn down. For example; the vegetation screen could be made in the shape of a fish or other appropriate form of wildlife.

This concept could also be used in the design of the screen to the pipeline emergency drawdown discharge control feature which will be located in the open space north of Purbrook Way

3.22 Pipeline route shown in ES Vol 4, Appendix A9.14; The maps at the back of the report show the trees assessed, sheet 37 of 40 appears to show the pipeline route on the wrong alignment, going below houses rather than through the open space?

6 December 2020

Note: Comments 3.21, 3.22 and Appendix B(Q10) are also relevant to pipeline planning application reference APP/20/00991.

Appendix A

HAVANT THICKET WINTER STORAGE RESERVOIR PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESPONSE XXXXXXXXXX

Member of the Havant Thicket Reservoir Wetland Sub-group

Former Senior Ranger at Titchfield Haven NNR with responsibility for managing up to 9 countryside sites for Hampshire County Council

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our plans to build the reservoir?

I agree with the plans for the reservoir because there is an urgent regional need for a sustainable supply of drinking water. This scheme can provide that and there are increasingly few alternative locations available in the south of England.

.....

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our approach to the different aspects of the scheme?

The location of the reservoir.

I agree with the location of the reservoir. The location is in a natural bowl and is geographically central to the Portsmouth Water supply area. The project also fulfils sustainability criteria as the chosen site is underlain by clay.

The design of the reservoir.

I agree with the overall design of the reservoir.

The road to provide access for the public.

The plan shows two route options. The **southern option** is completely inappropriate as it will bring several years of construction traffic to the site through a densely populated housing estate. On completion, hundreds of thousands of visitors will follow. This level of disturbance will be wholly unfair to the residents of Leigh Park and Warren Park. The inevitable long-term exposure to noise and congestion combined with the inherent safety issues associated with the southern option make this the wrong choice. It will also be a far less attractive introduction to the reservoir for arriving visitors, effectively “urbanising” what should be a countryside experience.

The **northern route** will have far less impact on any residents as it is more remote from population centres and also provides a much more straightforward access to a motorway junction directly from a “B” road. This will create less congestion and be simpler for visitors to navigate. The northern route will of course require widening of the existing forestry access track but this could provide opportunities to enhance habitats alongside the upgraded road through the existing plantation woodland. This would create a much more attractive rural approach to the site for visitors and provide improved access for future forestry operations.

The worst option would be a through route combining both the southern and northern options. **This would not resolve any of the negative issues but would be likely to create a “rat run” for traffic and scramble bikes.** It would also be unnecessarily expensive.

The creation of a wetland for wildlife.

Portsmouth Water should be commended for providing a wetland of this scale within the project and for their engagement with bodies such as Natural England, Hampshire Wildlife Trust and RSPB. A retained wetland should be a huge asset to the local community as well as to regional biodiversity, particularly given its proximity to the coastal SPAs. The true potential of the wetland may not be

realised for several years but **it is important to ensure that public access is carefully manipulated and controlled through careful design from the start so that disturbance is kept to a minimum.** The plan proposes circular walks around the reservoir perimeter with branches off to viewing points overlooking the wetland. This is a very sensible approach as it will help to reduce footfall to more sensitive areas. **It is also imperative that adequate screening is in place before public access begins** and that there are adequate physical barriers to prevent access by people and dogs to key features such as the all-important retaining structure. This is a multi-faceted project, but the primary purpose of the wetland should always be conservation and the enhancement of biodiversity. To meet its full potential and to help mitigate loss of existing habitats, the retained wetland should be structurally diverse and cover as large an area as possible.

The location of the visitor centre.

I agree that the visitor centre should be in the north-west corner of the site. This is the best location in terms of keeping large numbers of visitors and vehicles away from residential areas to the south and east. It also provides an attractive woodland backdrop. **However, the current plan proposes putting the visitor centre on stilts within the retained wetland. The primary conservation area of the site. This seems contradictory in the extreme. To provide a wetland habitat and then put the honey-pot location in it is bizarre! The centre is where the greatest amount of disturbance will occur. The highest numbers of visitors, the highest number of kids, the highest number of dogs. Why would you put that in the conservation zone? Of course, the centre needs to have a view over the water, but this can be achieved by setting the centre back on the shore. There will be a lot of water to look at.**

There appear to be several contradictions in the consultation information regarding the exact location / design of the visitor centre. In the Consultation Brochure 2020, the visualisation sketch shows a large glass-fronted building on the bank of the reservoir yet there is no icon for it **on the Outline Masterplan map and elsewhere it appears to be on stilts in the wetland. It is supposedly “imbedded in the landscape” yet it is completely at odds with the landscape.** Creating a visitor centre on stilts in the water may be architecturally and visually impressive but it is so impractical to manage. **On-going maintenance is more complicated**, plumbing issues potentially harder to resolve, deliveries require more manual handling and the play areas are remote from the centre. The reservoir itself being a large body of water, is likely to create wind. The north edge will be the most exposed so **the provision of outside seating for food is likely to generate a litter problem** with napkins, cups and wrappers ending up in the water and, ultimately, in the wetland.

The current vision shows a visitor centre with lots of large glass panel. This will provide panoramic views but, **especially if it is located on the water, could result in bird strikes. It is also a significant vandalism risk. The building will need to be very resilient.**

Surely the visitor centre should be set back from the wetland adjacent to the play areas. Parents vary in how carefully and how closely they watch their children. **I would be very surprised if anyone who has ever run a visitor centre would suggest separating the play areas from the centre.** Not all parents think the same way. Close is safe.

The size of the visitor centre and the facilities it will offer.

The visitor centre seems to be an appropriate size for the site. However, **centres invariably need more space than anticipated.** A large café and sufficient toilets are the most important features as these are always the most heavily used facilities. A café with a view towards the water will be a big bonus. Indeed, **it is likely that the café kitchen will need to be extended if the site becomes really popular,** particularly given the number of new housing developments nearby. A sunny south-facing **outdoor terrace/patio would be beneficial but not over the water where the movement of people and associated noise would extend the area of disturbance into the wetland.** Having a room which can be hired out for community group meetings would be useful. It is good that there is space for staff and volunteers so that the centre can act as a hub for the community encouraging participation in events and all aspects of community engagement. **One of the big disadvantages of a visitor centre on stilts is that it is much more difficult to extend and so, lacks future-proofing.**

The network of paths

The provision of recreational routes seems very good and they appear to link well to the wider rights of way network which is so important for the local community. It is essential that circular routes are surfaced to a high standard to encourage visitors to preferentially use those routes and that sub-standard sections of existing links are upgraded accordingly.

Parking

The level of parking provision seems to be appropriate at the current time. It would however be better if the parking was further back to create more grassland around the visitor centre for recreation. Open plan car parks are the easiest to manage. [Do not be tempted to make the parking zone too complicated with unnecessary planting and complicated bays. Security is much easier to maintain when cars are readily visible.](#)

Other outside visitor facilities

The provision of raised viewpoints on the south and south-west embankment is a good idea as this provides a different perspective of the reservoir and these may provide attractive areas for local kids to enjoy.

As mentioned earlier, I believe [the main play area should be as close to the visitor centre as possible, essentially on the south side adjacent to a café patio/terrace.](#) Picnic areas should, as is planned, be kept close to the visitor centre only. Putting additional tables elsewhere will only result in the need for more litter clearance in the future.

There will be many people asking for bird hides. They are not appropriate at this site as they are likely to be subject to significant vandalism. Keep to using low-key, screened viewing areas, such as raised mounds. The exact orientation and location of these should be determined at a later date once the wetland habitats have developed and it becomes apparent which areas the wildlife favour.

It is a [good idea to install Dog Dips on the shoreline south of the visitor centre as long as this is away from the main conservation area of the wetland.](#) Dogs will want to enter the water, so it is sensible to provide a focal point for this to happen to give future managers some mechanism to control where it happens.

An education hide is only desirable if there is a tangible benefit. If, for example, there is no wildlife to view close by it does not really serve a useful purpose. [So, if a hide is to be built make sure it is worth the investment. If there is disturbance nearby it may not be worthwhile.](#) For access a boardwalk is a nice idea as it creates a different feel and sense of adventure, [but it must be well screened to prevent any disturbance to wildlife.](#) Control of vegetation in front of hide windows is always a problem. Creating a deep water channel immediately in front may help to do this and also negates potential vandalism issues.

Note: Consultation response included with the consent of the author.

Appendix B

Response by XXXXXXXXXX to the Havant Thicket Reservoir Consultation May 2020

Overview – I am in full support of the proposal to site a new reservoir on the Portsmouth Water land at Havant Thicket. It is great that Portsmouth Water and Southern Water are working together to provide a more environmentally friendly sustainable solution to allow reduced abstraction from the internationally important chalk streams (River Itchen and River Test).

I believe that there are a number of aspects of the outline design concepts shown in the consultation documents that can be significantly improved to minimise the impact on the environment and to protect and optimise the benefit provided by the new retained wetland conservation area. Additional feedback is provided in response to the consultation below.

Extracts of consultation response provided below;

Access Route - Dual route option;

Portsmouth Water (SH) indicated in a webinar that the access route at each end would be gated to prevent the dual route being used as a rat run for traffic, with the gates only open when the visitor centre is open and staffed. This is not likely to be a viable option. Most country park sites, including those run by HCC, generally have their carparks open for longer hours than the visitor centres, recognising the demand for dog walking, jogging and cycling from early in the morning to later in the evening. Whereas the visitor centres typically open from 0930 or 10.00 (SCP 10.00 to 17.00 summer hours). If the car park is not open and available for longer hours from early in the morning then people will still visit and park on the local streets at Warren Park or Rowlands Castle, something that the local residents have expressed concerns about for many years.

Note: The traffic assessment vehicle numbers posted on the website suggest up to 29 cars an hour arrive on a weekday before 10am and up to 60 vehicles an hour at the weekend. These vehicles will need somewhere to park and provision does need to be made for that in the access/parking strategy.

Pipeline compound traffic; I do not believe that the reservoir site should be used as a construction compound for the pipeline with access off Swanmore Road, as has been suggested by Atkins. It is remote from the pipeline route and therefore not ideal from a contractor's point of view. The construction traffic movements would impact even more residents over a longer period if it was to be sited off Swanmore Road. It is likely that pipeline construction would take place over 3 years and this will significantly increase the disturbance from vehicle movements to residents along Swanmore Road, who would already be impacted by the reservoir construction. There is no need to site the compound in such a remote location from the planned works when there is ample open space closer to the construction, even along the pipeline route itself. For example, off Purbrook Way where Portsmouth Water will already have to arrange access for construction and an easement with Portsmouth City Council, so a compound area could be negotiated at the same time. Purbrook Road is already a significant traffic artery through Leigh Park, whereas Swanmore Road is not.

Note: A graph has been added to the website to illustrate construction traffic volumes. This indicated that there will be no pipeline construction traffic in the summer. This is not realistic. Construction of the pipeline within school grounds and immediately outside of schools will have to take place in the school holiday periods. Construction in wet grassland areas such as in the parkland north of Middle Park Way will be quicker, cheaper and have reduced impact if it can take place in the summer. The Bedhampton Community Centre asked that the construction through their car park take place in August when the centre is less busy. Winter construction will also give more problems and extra cost for dewatering. It is not reasonable or sensible to assume winter only construction for the pipeline. (Note: Planning application now confirms that construction will take place in the summer, when reservoir construction will also be taking place)

Question 4 – The creation of a wetland for wildlife?

I fully support the proposal to create a new sustainable freshwater wetland habitat close to the internationally important habitats on the coast. The area of the wetland along the northern shore should be as large as practicable to optimise the conservation value. It is essential that;

- The wetland is retained to protect the habitat and wildlife during drawdown events. The total area retained should not be less than is currently shown on the outline masterplan.
- The main visitor routes are kept away from the northern wetland to minimise the potential for disturbance. The proposal shown with separate footpaths down to specific viewpoints on the wetland edge is a sensible solution, although on the consultation flythrough video the approach paths are not shown with adequate landscape screening. These approach paths to the viewing points must be well screened and each view point itself carefully designed to minimise disturbance.
- It will be necessary to [provide and maintain mesh fencing to prevent access to the wetland by people and dogs](#), with gates provided across the paths down to the view points.

Page 16 of the consultation brochure shows in the illustration that opportunities are being explored to enable planting within the hard armouring used to protect the embankment from erosion. This is not shown in the illustration for the retaining structure on page 8. [Opportunities to make provision for planting on the south side of the wetland retaining structure should also be explored.](#)

Question 5 - The location of the visitor centre?

NW corner location; While I support the location of the visitor centre in the NW corner of the site, the exact location is surprisingly not shown on the outline master plan map, despite the fact that this is a specific consultation question. The new leisure facility page of the brochure states that the plan is to locate the centre on the waterfront. While I would prefer to see the visitor centre set back from the wetland in the NW corner to reduce disturbance, I understand the desire to make it a waterfront location for commercial reasons and to encourage the public to engage with nature. However, if a waterside location is proposed [the design layout must be done very sensitively to minimise the potential for disturbance within the adjacent retained wetland conservation area.](#)

Island or pier location; While not mentioned in the text in an aerial simulation the visitor centre is shown as an island (or possibly a pier) within the western end of the wetland. In the Reservoir Visitor Centre video narrated by Kieran Dyer at 0.32 to 0.34 seconds the visitor centre is shown as an island within the wetland, with a wide path/ terrace shown around the edge of the building (see below).



I do not support the concept of the visitor centre being located as an island (or pier) [within the retained wetland for the following reasons;](#)

- It will [result in the loss of valuable retained wetland habitat below the footprint of the building.](#)

- **Placing the visitor centre within the wetland will cause disturbance of the adjacent wetland conservation area over a more extended area through movement and noise as people arrive, leave and enjoy the visitor centre facilities, especially the wrap round terrace.** With the land take and the inevitable disturbance caused by the visitor centre with this proposed design layout you are **effectively sacrificing a larger area of the wetland conservation area than needs to be.**
- The south-west prevailing wind will **carry litter into the wetland**, especially from the exposed wrap round terrace, which will be more difficult to screen and control in an exposed island or pier setting.
- Highlighted in bold text on page 6 of the consultation brochure it states that; “At the heart of our design is our care and consideration of the environment.” It is not credible to claim that the environment is at the heart of the design, and that this is an environmentally led project, then choose to place the visitor centre within the conservation wetland area when that is completely unnecessary.
- A key requirement in the feedback from stakeholders was the need for flexibility and future proofing of the design. It was specifically also highlighted by the water industry experts as a key design criteria for the visitor centre at the CAR conference workshop. **An island location reduces the flexibility for future proofing and expansion of the visitor centre without taking up more valuable wetland habitat space and causing further significant environmental impacts for construction at a later date.**
- The visitor centre and **associated terrace for 50 additional seats would be much closer to the location of the education bird hide and retaining structure island. This will result in disturbance to this area of the wetland and reduce the viewing experience from the education hide** as birds will be discouraged from feeding and resting close to or opposite the hide.
- **The location of the visitor centre within the retained wetland conservation area will reduce the wildlife value of the west end of the wetland.** Maximising the wetland conservation area is critical to the project to provide an overall biodiversity net gain and ensure support from Natural England, the Environment Agency and LPA Ecologist. **It is completely inappropriate to create a wetland to provide a net gain and then reduce the value of the gain by choosing to site visitor facilities within it.**
- **An island location makes the building more difficult to service and replenish supplies to the café, shop and office, and to remove equipment and rubbish, requiring service vehicles to travel right down to the waters edge**, which would not be necessary if the building was located on the water’s edge. Having vehicles drive to the waterfront can only add to the disturbance. The space for provision of a service yard and bin store is not shown on the outline plan, nor in the aerial simulation video.
- **Utility services will be more difficult and costly to provide to an island or pier location**, especially foul drainage, which will probably need to be pumped up to ground level. I would be particularly concerned about the exposed and vulnerable nature of services below the building in this urban fringe location.
- An island location makes it more difficult to connect the building to the proposed external education space(s)
- An island location will make the visitor centre more costly to construct and maintain. This is a particular concern as Ofwat have already expressed doubt about funding for the visitor centre, so it is important that costs are constrained through practical and sensible design.
- I do not believe that an island location provides additional security for the building. Instead out of hours access is likely to be seen as a challenge. **The pier like terrace illustrated around the building over the water provides the risk of youths using it as a jumping / diving platform.** With the ability for access to below the structure carrying an increased risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
- Page 18 of the consultation brochure stated that; “Creating the new wetland is a very important part of our plans to support wildlife and birds and create a positive legacy.”

Through better planning of the layout more can be done to design out predictable issues to ensure the wetland is the best it can be and the potential for disturbance is minimised.

There is no overriding reason why the visitor centre needs to be located on an island or pier within the wetland conservation area. The visitor centre can be located on the shore at the back western edge of the bay where it will still have a waterfront location, with great views over the wetland and reservoir from an enclosed café, connecting people with nature. **The terrace to provide the extra 50 peak time seats for the cafe can be located on land to the south side of the centre to avoid the seating and railings blocking views from the café windows, minimise the potential for disturbance and reduce the risk of litter blow** with the careful use of rustic mesh fencing and landscaping to shelter the terrace from the prevailing wind. The outline concept for the visitor centre needs to be revised to remove the island / pier location for the benefit of the wetland, ensuring the scheme optimises the opportunity for biodiversity net gain and minimises the risk of disturbance to the conservation area.

Question 6 - The size of the visitor centre and the facilities it will offer?

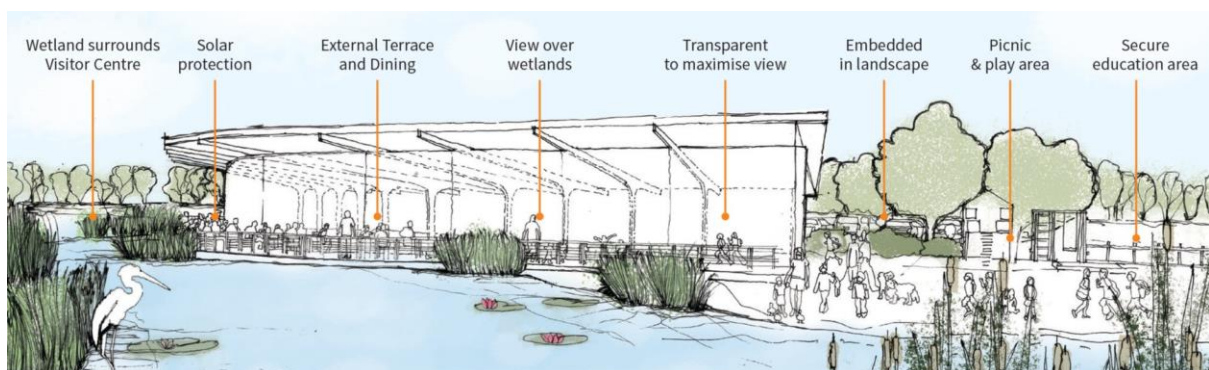
I support the general description of the facilities to be provided in association with the visitor centre. However, I do **not think that enough has been done to consider the future proofing of this facility**. Additional flexible, multi-functional space should have been included within the floor space allocation to guarantee future proofing and enable the building to be adapted for different uses. This should include making extra provision for spare utilities capacity.

Two aspects specifically highlighted by water industry experts (CAR) that need to be considered further are;

- **Ensuring that the floor plan layout makes provision now for an extra building cell/ extension to be easily added at a later date.**
- **Ensuring provision is made for mains drainage. Any extra initial capital cost will be offset by the massive operational benefits.**

I do not think it is a realistic proposition to assume that if educational (or other) water sports were to be added in the future that there would be funding for a separate building as proposed by the Atkins architects. If a partner does come forward it is highly unlikely that they or Portsmouth Water would have funds for a new building. Therefore, it is important to make provision now for a serviced multi-functional space, which in the short to medium term could be used by volunteers, or as meeting rooms. **Or as a minimum design in the ability to add a cell for this future expansion of facilities as part of the outline design criteria.** If this is not done, in the future it is likely to be achieved by the provision of unsightly portacabins which would be undesirable and prone to vandalism.

The aerial simulation video currently shows a green roof to the visitor centre. Whilst I support the concept of a sustainable design, I do not believe that such a feature would be likely to survive the anti-social behaviour, it is more likely to encourage youths to try and access the roof. A more robust design concept for the roof should be adopted.



The illustration above showing an outline design concept for “what the visitor centre could look like” is used in various places within the consultation materials. I have a number of concerns about the concept shown.

- Maintaining the rural character of the area and not urbanising the site are two of the key design criteria applicable to the NW visitor hub area. The text on the new leisure facility page of the brochure states; “The visitor centre is being designed with a rural character to fit in with the natural environment and will be made with natural materials, such as wood”. **The glass dominated illustration for the outline design shown is not in any way in keeping with the rural character or the natural environment of the area.** It looks like a Tesco’s Superstore frontage and in my view will detract from the rural and historic character of the area.
- **No attempt has been made to utilise local materials such as brick and flint. There were historically brickworks around the east side of the site and brick would provide a more appropriate choice of material as it is also robust. Flint is used in buildings in Rowlands Castle and that could be added to provide features of architectural interest at the detailed design stage, as has been done in other modern buildings in the local area.**
- Although the use of wood is mentioned in the text it is not visible in the illustration. I would be concerned about the use of wood externally due to vandalism, but with the oak resource available on site, it would be great and very sustainable if that could be used in the interior structure of the building.
- **Large glass areas in this urban fringe setting are at risk of vandalism.** When the centre at Testwood Lakes opened windows which were not shuttered were immediately vandalised. Further consideration should be given to the choice of materials to ensure that the design concept is robust in this vulnerable urban fringe location.
- **The use of floor to ceiling glass is not necessary.** The area of glass shown will reflect light and increase the visibility of the building from key viewpoints such as the terrace at Staunton Country Park and in distant views from the South Downs National Park. Great views could still be provided from the visitor centre across the wetland and reservoir if the windows were from 1m to 2.5m high.
- **Reducing the area of glass will also help to minimise the risk of bird strikes,** which is more likely to be a problem where the water can be reflected in the glass.
- Glass at ground level is not necessary, is more at risk of damage and getting covered in toddler fingerprints. It will be difficult to keep clean.
- The height of the building is unnecessarily high, especially given the need to blend the building into the rural landscape and consider views from The Terrace at Staunton Country Park. There is no need for a tall building if it is only to be one storey high as proposed.
- An external terrace is shown wrapping round the visitor centre building in the aerial simulation. The necessary safety railings, external tables / chairs and sitting area outside for 50 people will **detract from the views from inside the café, encouraging more people to sit outside causing extra disturbance.**
- **The location of the terrace will be exposed and difficult to screen without detracting from the views, litter will inevitably be carried from the tables on the terrace into the wetland.** It would be better to have the terrace on the southside of the building where it can be more protected from the SW prevailing wind by landscape screening, plus set back from the water’s edge to enable rustic mesh fencing to be provided to trap litter, allow it to be easily collected, and reduce the impact of the terrace on the wetland.
- **People arriving, using and leaving the terrace will create noise and movement which will disturb wildlife, especially birds using the conservation wetland,** extending the area of disturbance further into the wetland and reducing the value of the wetland. It is highly likely that visitors using the terrace will throw things into the wetland from the terrace (food, cigarette stubs etc).

- The text in the illustration describes the wetland surrounding the visitor centre. Having a wrap round terrace increases the area over which disturbance will be caused to the wetland conservation area. This is not appropriate.



View from western shore to the east – the illustration above shows a picnic area in the foreground, in the background is the wetland, with the terrace for public access shown wrapping round the visitor centre which is shown as some kind of pier construction, although it is not clear that it is an island.

- The picnic area located and illustrated above south of the visitor centre would be a better location for the proposed visitor centre terrace with a direct access to the café. The illustration shows that a café terrace in this location would still have great views across the wetland and reservoir. **There is no need to locate the terrace over the wetland where it will increase the area over which people cause disturbance right into the conservation wetland.**
- **The pier like terrace illustrated around the visitor centre building over the water provides the risk of youths using it as a jumping / diving platform. With the added disadvantage of having the ability for unwanted access to below the structure carrying an increased risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. For example; to utility services, drains etc.**

The outline design concept for the visitor centre shown makes no attempt to blend in with the rural and historic character of the area. Nor does it make any attempt to minimise the impact of the facility and its visitors on the wetland conservation area. A new outline design concept needs to be developed for the visitor centre which is in keeping with the rural and historic character of the area before the planning application is submitted.

Question 9 – Other outside visitor facilities such as picnic sites, play areas and bird hides?

The new leisure facilities page described under the section on **play areas, picnic sites and trails;**

Boardwalk proposal; The new leisure facility page text and the video by the landscape architect describe; “A **wetland boardwalk** would run from outside the visitor centre **to a bird hide among the reeds next to the water, encouraging visitors to get closer to the wildlife on the site** and learn more about it.” While I support the idea of having a boardwalk and pond dipping facility along the channel to the north of the visitor centre where it can be set back from the main wetland, **it is important that this trail does not extend around the waters edge to the education bird hide.** People, children and dogs walking along a boardwalk/ waters edge will cause unnecessary disturbance to the wetland conservation area and the opportunity for this must be minimised.

- The path from the visitor centre to the education bird hide can start close to the water and traverse the channel to the north where the depth of water can be controlled for H&S purposes around a pond dipping facility.
- The path can then be **set back from the waters edge to minimise the risk of disturbance while maintaining views, with the water’s edge protected by mesh fencing/ low hedging to prevent people and dogs accessing the water within the retained wetland.**

- As the path approaches the education bird hide it is essential that it is fully screened, otherwise those approaching the hide to view the wildlife will scare it off before they arrive.

Robust mesh fencing and landscaping will need to be provided along the whole of the NW shore to prevent people and dogs from accessing the retained wetland conservation area. Particular attention needs to be paid to the design of the measures close to where the wetland retaining structure joins the shore to prevent access to the island, especially during drawdown, no barriers are currently shown.

Education bird hide; a concept illustration for the bird hide is shown on the 'how the reservoir will look' page of the consultation (see below)



- There is no dense landscape screening shown on either side of the hide as a result those arriving at the hide will cause disturbance to the birds as they arrive, reducing the opportunity to have a good experience to engage with nature.
- The hide is shown set back from the waters edge, with vegetation growing up in front of the hide. This is a poor design concept and will cause a number of issues. It will detract from the viewing experience as birds will be hidden behind the vegetation. The vegetation will have to be regularly cut to maintain views and this will cause further disturbance when the cutting is undertaken. Well designed hides are either raised up to be above the vegetation, or located on the water's edge, with a deeper water channel in front of the hide to discourage vegetation from growing up in front of the hide windows. A position on the edge of the water also reduces the risk of visitors accessing the front of the hide. I have seen people sunbathing and picnicking on the roof of hides and the illustration shown looks ideal for these unwanted activities either on the roof, or in front of the hide.
- Consideration should be given to providing a different shape frontage to the hide to enable viewing in different directions over the wetland.
- The large more open education space at the centre of the hide is shown as having floor to ceiling windows. This is unnecessary and increases the risk of disturbance and damage. There is no need for the bottom 1m of the frontage to be glass.
- **Consideration should be given to providing one-way glass.** As can be seen in the illustration normal glass allows movement within the hide to be seen by the wildlife using the wetland.
- **The siting of the visitor centre as an island or pier within the bay to the south-west moves the centre too close to the education hide.** The close proximity of the two structures is shown in the illustration above. As indicated above **the movement and noise from visitors and families using the visitor centre terrace will result in disturbance to the wetland around the education bird hide and islands, reducing the viewing and education experience / opportunities.** If because of the island location for the visitor centre you then have to move the bird hide north to reduce / avoid the disturbance from the visitor centre,

then the general disturbance from the main visitor hub would extend over a broader area of the western wetland which is completely unnecessary, if a more appropriate location for the visitor centre is selected on the west edge of the bay.

- Particular thought needs to be given to whether the windows on each side of the hide will open. This had advantages for bird watchers and photographers, but disadvantages in relation to noise and security.
- The education bird hide must be carefully designed to minimise the risk of out of hours anti-social behaviour and vandalism in this urban fringe setting. Hides at night can be used as drug dens. **An ideal design would be more of a buried bunker concept with robust landscape screening on the approach.**

Play area; This is currently shown remote from the visitor centre. Feedback from managers of other reservoir and country parks is that the play area should be located within sight of the visitor centre, in order that parents can keep an eye on their children from the cafe. If the visitor centre is relocated to the land in a waterfront location (instead of as an island) there would be the opportunity to do this by siting the play area nearby.

Slipway; A slipway is not currently shown on the Atkins Outline Masterplan. A slipway was shown on the previous 2009 Outline Plan and is needed for operational access to the water for inspection and maintenance. **The provision of a slipway would also provide an element of future proofing to the outline design should educational water sports of some kind be proposed at a later date.** Including a slipway in the design would help to address stakeholder feedback about future proofing and would be a lot easier to build as a part of the main construction.

Use of the water; During the previous 2008 consultation there was feedback from both stakeholders and the public about enhancing and protecting biodiversity while not wasting the opportunity that the water provides. While any activities would have to be low key to avoid any conflict with the biodiversity objectives, **the opportunity for future canoe or sail training, or perhaps sea cadet use, or club rowing (no facilities locally) should remain an option.** This could be in a later phase but the design needs to make provision for this future proofing by providing a slipway and allowing space for provision of changing rooms.

Dog use and provision of a dog dip(s); The consultation materials do not make any reference to the provision of carefully located and designed dog dips. The site is currently used extensively by dog walkers and it is inevitable that once the reservoir is in place that dogs will try to access the water. **It is important that the screening and fencing along the boundary to the wetland, especially in the NW area is robust and prevents dog access.**

I believe that it is better to recognise the desire by dogs, and their owners to want their dogs to access the water and to make provision for this in an area where it will cause the least possible disturbance. Oak sleepers have been used at other sites such as the Itchen Navigation and Titchfield Canal to create dog dips where dogs can safely access the water without causing erosion of the banks. Pictures have been provided to the Atkins Landscape Architect. This would be a good sustainable use for some of the oak removed from the site.

A suitable place for a dog dip to be provided would be just north of the tip of the western embankment where a slipway has previously been shown. This is away from the retained wetland, relatively close to the carpark and would attract people with dogs away from more sensitive woodland areas. The dog dip could be carefully designed in conjunction with the layout of the slipway to have a dog dip on either side of the slipway.

Question 10 – The route of the reservoir pipeline?

Finding a practical pipeline route through the developed area from Bedhampton to the reservoir site was never going to be easy. I think that Portsmouth Water have done their best to take on board the feedback from the 2008 public consultation and locate a route that;

- Minimises the impact on the environment, avoiding Great Copse and narrow wooded sections of the stream corridors.
- Utilises the open space along the stream corridors where practical.
- Avoids the major traffic arteries through Leigh Park along which the previous route options were shown, which led to significant concern being expressed by the residents about disruption to the local community.

Do you have any concerns about the reservoir that you would like us to know about?

Existing valuable habitats at the site will be lost and it is essential that a biodiversity net gain is delivered by the project. **The opportunities associated with the wetland creation must be maximised.**

The need to provide community facilities must not be done in a way that is detrimental to the wetland conservation area.

Do you agree that the online and printed information we've provided is useful?

Yes, the consultation information provided is very useful in setting out the outline design concepts being considered. However I am concerned that the information presented in relation to the visitor centre location is inconsistent and potentially confusing.

- The location is not specifically shown on Outline Masterplan, there is just a text box in the NW corner area.
- The consultation brochure simply states that the plan is to locate the centre on the waterfront but again no plan is provided.
- On the aerial simulation fly-through the visitor centre label arrow which appears points to an area adjacent to the carpark, but the building is actually shown further east as an island or pier within the retained wetland conservation area.
- The illustration sketch of what the visitor centre could look like (page 6 above) shows a waterfront location with a terrace in front. There is no indication that it is an island or pier.
- The image from inside the wetland looking west towards the education hide and visitor centre (page 8 above) appears to be a waterfront location, but it is not clearly an island.
- The image from the picnic area (page 7 above) looking east over the wetland shows the visitor centre as a kind of pier construction but again it is not clearly an island.

I spoke to two well respected individuals with an interest in wildlife after they had attended a consultation webinar and neither of them realised that the visitor centre was shown as an island with the retained wetland conservation area.

I listened to 5 of the 6 recorded webinars and none of the speakers mentioned the proposal for an island location, the only mention was of a waterfront location.

Given the above I do not believe that a positive response to question 5 of the consultation which related to the visitor centre location can be taken as an endorsement of an island or pier location within the wetland conservation area. Instead I would suggest that it could only be seen as support for a waterfront location on the western edge of the wetland.

6 June 2020 (extracts of my response to Portsmouth Water)

Text highlighted in blue is particularly relevant to the 2020 planning application