FAO: Narinder Lakhan - Planning Case Officer EHDC & HBC

RE:- Non-material amendment applications for changes to the Havant Thicket Reservoir western embankment and transition zone to the southern embankment

- **Section 73 Non-Material Amendment:** EHDC-25-1219-NMA
- **Phase 3 Reserved Matters Non-Material Amendment:** EHDC-25-1220-NMA
- **Conditions 28 & 36 (Re-discharge):** EHDC-25-1230-DCON

And the corresponding Havant Borough Council identical planning applications

Having reviewed the information submitted by the applicant for these applications I am concerned that;

- **The application description of the planned changes does not make it clear that the crest road on the western embankment will move west by up to 13.5m**
- **The significance of the inner and outer embankment slope changes has not been fully considered, especially in the context of their impact on the western part of the site.** Further detail is provided below.

While if you delve into the detail of the Adams Hendry pdf report on the slope changes you can find information on the significant change to the position of the crest road and slopes, this is certainly not obvious on the drawings submitted. This is partly due to their scale but also because the embankment section shown on Drg.0010 is drawn for an area where the embankment is narrow and thus the change in slopes is of less significance. The more technical and smaller sections on Drg. 4003 at chainage 345m and 700m do not highlight the change by showing the currently approved slopes and are harder for a lay person to view/ relate to.

It is important that when considering the proposed changes that the LPA take into account the following before deciding if the change has any material impacts.

1. Pre-development the existing slopes in the landscape at the site ranged from level up to 1 in 7, but most were less than that. The original design principle for the site was that the embankment slopes should be a maximum of 1 in 7 to help the embankments blend into the local landscape so that they would not look like man-made structures, with an exception made in the area of the control house to save more of the ancient woodland. **Increasing the outer slope of the western embankment from 1 in 8 to a much steeper gradient of 1 in 5.5 changes the nature of the bank making it obvious it is a man-made structure**.

   Adams Hendry underplay the visual impact by asserting that the western embankment is not really visible from adjacent housing, but that is to miss the point, the steeper slope will be clearly visible from the existing local footpaths/ bridleway, southern access road, new embankment toe path and the western crest road/ path. **These are the locations from where the significant change from the more natural looking gentler slope should be assessed**, especially as in the future these new and existing recreational routes, will be heavily used by visitors to the reservoir and Havant Thicket, with the paths/ cycle routes between the visitor centre and the Leigh Park Viewing Area being key visitor routes.

2. The **change on the inner embankment slope to a much gentler slope of 1 in 9.5 has disadvantages** that I did not find mentioned in the Adams Hendry report, nor the Future Water (Haskoning) Environment Assessment. On drawdown a gentler slope will mean that more of the slope which would normally be below water will be visible, and it will remain visible for longer. With regular drawdown events expected **the visual impact of drawdown events should be taken into account by the LPA when considering changes to the embankment slopes**. This will be especially significant when assessing the visual impact

from the western and south-western crest road, the grass recreational area south of the planned visitor centre and even from the visitor centre itself. The visual impact assessment for the changes in slope should consider the visual impact during drawdown from these areas.

3. Have the applicant and LPA considered if the changes in slope needed could have been less severe if Future Water had taken **a more joined up approach and considered the embankment slope amendments alongside changing the southern access road to a single track road with passing places**, as supported at the 2024 workshop by the majority of stakeholders. Space saved on the reduced width of the access road could be used to retain a gentler outer embankment slope more in keeping with the site contours, making it less obvious that it is a man-made bank, helping to protect the rural landscape.

There are two changes to the previously approved design that I welcome.

- Amendment to locally steepen the northern tip of the western embankment to retain/ protect the existing mature oak tree (Drg.0034).
- Extension of the amphitheatre seating to the west on the NE edge of the Leigh Park View point (Drg.007). Although I note the applicant has changed the surface of the terraced seating area from grass to gravel, which will be less attractive, but maybe more practical to reduce erosion and maintain if heavily used as a seating area.

While the increase in size of the amphitheatre is welcome, I note that my previous comments made in relation to **creating a more ambitious and multi-functional view point with involvement from the local community in the design have not been taken on board** (see Appendix A).

In relation to discharge of Condition 28 & 36 it is **disappointing that the landscape drawings for the Leigh Park View Point (Drg. 007 & 0030) do not maximise the biodiversity mitigation opportunity.** The developer proposes an ‘ornamental planting mix’ on the large areas denoted with hexagon shading on Drg.0030 with a high proportion of non-native species to be planted. I would ask that the LPA and stakeholders press for a much higher proportion of native species to be planted in these flower beds, choosing species that can attract insects and provide a food source for bats and birds, increasing the biodiversity potential for this important island of vegetation which can then act as a ‘stepping stone for nature’ to feed and move around the site.

I note that the landscape drawings still show **no fence on the south / west edge of the crest** road to prevent public access on to the outer slope of the southern and western embankment. This is vital to enable the wildflower meadows to be planted on the slopes to deliver their full biodiversity potential. For example, there is no chance of skylarks nesting on the outer slopes if the public and dogs have access because there is no fencing to discourage access.

I note that on Drg.0032 a continuous landscape corridor is shown of existing vegetation in the vicinity of the NE corner of Swanmore Road. This is an error as a significant area of tree and scrub vegetation is being removed to make way for the southern access road which breaches the western wildlife corridor. Landscape connectivity in that area needs more attention.

I hope that you will take account of my comments when considering these 3 applications relating to what are significant changes to the western embankment.

[redacted]

12 November 2025

[redacted]

Appendix A

Reservoir Embankment changes – Feedback sent to LPA 3/6/24 (extract only)

Planning references Phase 3: HBC APP/24/00311 EHDC ref: 51680/11

Planning references Section 73: HBC APP/24/00312 EHDC ref: 51680/12

G7. Drg. 0007 – Landscape Plan Viewing Platform (Outline Permission)

Certain aspects of the Landscape Plan for the eastern viewing platform could be improved and additional details could be shown that would improve the value of the area for visitors, education and to make it more multi-functional.

a) Part of the design concept for the western viewpoint was to include a grass amphitheatre which is currently shown as a very small grass seating area to the NE of the main hard landscaped part of the viewing platform. This is welcome as a different type of an area to enjoy the view and sit peacefully and does reflect the hybrid outline design, but it **lacks the ambition of the original design concept developed with stakeholders.** The grass amphitheatre with views out over the reservoir was originally conceived as a more multi functional area which would be suitable for education visits and other functions, that could be used by the local community, youth groups and schools in imaginative ways during daylight hours. The small scale of the existing feature prohibits this kind of more ambitious use.
    - Could the extensive planting area south of the existing amphitheatre be developed in a more imaginative way to provide this multi-functional grassed amphitheatre area originally envisaged as part of the view point. This could work with the existing smaller lower area to create a pleasing tiered drop to the water's edge.
    - Could local schools be invited to get involved in developing the design for this area so that there is a sense that the local community own and value the area, which may help to discourage anti-social behaviour?
    - This would add more interest for the local community to the viewing area, providing an area for family picnics, couples to meet, guide/ scout groups and church groups to gather.
    - I think a tiered grass sloped amphitheatre style seating area is more likely to stand up to any anti-social behaviour, rather than the fairly formal planting areas shown. The soil needed to form the banks can be derived from the site excavations to make it a very sustainable part of the project.
b) Intelligent design and incorporation of art in a way that minimise the risk of anti-social behaviour and vandalism in this area is important as the design is developed. Use of locally derived materials is supported.
c) It is not clear what the spillway to the NW of the viewing area comprises?, how much of the structure would be visible at top water level?, and what would become visible as the water level drops? For example, will the spillway be visible seasonally as water levels naturally drop in summer, or will it only be visible during a drought draw down event?
d) The plan shows post and rail fencing along the north side of the crest road. Elsewhere the cross-section refer to provision of a stock mesh fence to discourage dogs and children from accessing the water. The provision of a stock mesh fence would be preferable for that reason, but it needs to be a high quality fence befitting its location and the key part it provides in local views, not just a standard wooden post and wire fence. The fencing could incorporate bespoke art features to add to the interest.

The LPA should seek a more ambitious plan for the western viewing area, with involvement of the local community (particularly schools) in the development of the design going forward.

Additional Note 12/11/25: Consider whether the planting mix for the offshore 'native rush and sedge plugs' on Drg.0030 should include reed mace (bulrush), the seed heads are a good food source for birds and would provide visual interest along the waters edge.