



Meeting note

Project name	Southern Water Strategic Water Resource Project
File Reference	WA010002
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	25 November 2021
Meeting with	Southern Water
Venue	Virtual – Teams Meeting
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees/ <additional circulation>

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Developer explained that the need for their proposal is set out in the Water Resource Management Plan 19, as the plan identified a water supply deficit during severe droughts. The Developer has undertaken an options appraisal process where 3 options were considered. An alternative solution has arisen following this process (a hybrid option), which involves water transfer (via Havant Thicket reservoir) and water recycling.

The Developer undertook non-statutory consultation in February 2021 which mainly focused on desalination but also introduced the idea of alternatives. The Developer explained that the consultation highlighted more support for water transfer and recycling solutions than for desalination. The Developer has continued to engage with regulators, statutory consultees and with the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID), since then, as part of its options appraisal process. There are potentially 7 host local authorities for this proposal (including Hampshire County Council) and it is envisaged that a joint officers group will be established with the local authorities. Portsmouth Water's Havant Thicket reservoir has recently been consented, and the Developer is working closely with Portsmouth Water to understand how the two projects work together.

The Developer explained that the proposal does not meet the Planning Act 2008 threshold for deployable output, and so it is preparing a request for a section 35 Direction. Although the Developer does have some permitted development rights, they explained that due to the likely impacts of the project across a wide area, these rights would not be available. The proposal is likely to include some minor alterations to the



Havant Thicket reservoir consent, including in respect of the storage of recycled water in the reservoir.

The Inspectorate highlighted that the prospective Levelling Up Bill as well as the secondary legislation to support the Environment Act introduce some potential uncertainty in relation to future assessment products and the transitional provisions are being closely monitored. Survey access requirements were discussed and the Developer confirmed that s53 powers were not required at this time. The nutrient issues affecting the Solent area were discussed as were water neutrality issues in the Arun Valley. The potential for a Biodiversity Net Gain trading platform to operate in the Solent area from 2022 was highlighted. The Inspectorate queried the Developer's approach to delivering the net gain requirements in the Environment Act. The Developer stated that it was considering its wider corporate commitments and targets in relation to net gain and that project level commitments would follow.

The Developer is planning to undertake non-statutory consultation in summer 2022, followed by EIA scoping. Statutory consultation will take place in early 2023 with the submission of the application anticipated at the end of 2023.