



Meeting note

Project name	Hampshire Water Recycling and Water Transfer Plant
File reference	WAO10002
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	14 June 2022
Meeting with	Southern Water
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project update meeting
Circulation	All attendees

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.

Section 35 Direction

The Applicant updated the Inspectorate on the Section (s) 35 direction request which was submitted to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on 6 April 2022. Direction was given by the Secretary of State on 31 May 2022 that the Proposed Development is to be treated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under s35 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008).

The Inspectorate queried whether local authorities (LAs) had been consulted by DEFRA following the s35 direction request. The Applicant stated that they had made LAs aware that they were submitting a s35 direction request, but that DEFRA had not chosen to consult them.

The Inspectorate asked whether, given the positive s35 direction, the National Infrastructure webpage for the Proposed Development could go live. The Applicant stated they would provide a response in writing.

Non-Statutory Consultation

The Non-Statutory Consultation is due to take place between 5 July to 16 August 2022. Six community events will be supplemented by webinars and a virtual townhall event.

The Applicant confirmed that a preferred pipeline corridor had been selected and this would be communicated during the consultation, alongside preferred site zones for key infrastructure elements such as the water recycling plant and pumping zone. The

consultation would also present 'held corridor sections', which are not preferred corridors but have been considered as alternative options. There is no corridor in the South Downs National Park. The Inspectorate asked whether decisions had been made regarding the size of corridors. The Applicant stated that the pipeline was expected to be between one to two metres in diameter, but noted that the necessity for a sweetening flow while the pipeline was not in use meant work was being undertaken to assess whether a reduced size could facilitate a higher pressure water flow. The pipeline construction corridor would be 40m wide where open-cut trenching is used. The construction width would be reduced in select locations such as for some watercourse crossings, in sensitive areas, and for crossings of motorways, where tunnelling techniques would be used. Tunnelling is planned for urban areas.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Applicant updated the Inspectorate with the ongoing work in relation to the EIA. A programme of ecology surveys had commenced following discussions with relevant consultation bodies including the Environment Agency (EA), Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Natural England. Land surveys were being progressed, supplemented by aerial survey information where land access had been slower to obtain.

The Applicant indicated that submission of the EIA Scoping Report (SR) is expected in mid-September 2022. The Applicant is aware of the requirement to submit a shapefile in advance, at least ten working days before the formal request for a scoping opinion. The Inspectorate requested dialogue is maintained in regard to submission date to enable the Inspectorate time to make preparations.

The Inspectorate queried whether the EIA SR would include optionality for the corridor routes. The Applicant confirmed that it would show optionality including the preferred route and that as far as possible within the time available it would reflect the outcomes from the non-statutory consultation.

The Applicant indicated that it may seek to scope out effects in the marine environment in the EIA SR. The Inspectorate queried what works are currently proposed that might affect the marine environment. The Applicant clarified that an existing outfall in the Solent is proposed to be used with no change to the existing pipeline. There would be some changes to the connecting infrastructure and what is discharged from the pipeline; however, an improvement is expected with regards to the discharge.

Since the last project update meeting, the Applicant had held its first EIA working group meetings. The Applicant noted that the meetings had been limited to prescribed statutory consultees and that attendance had been good. The meetings had established terms of reference and had established patterns for future meetings. The next round of meetings would be used to seek informal feedback on the approach to EIA Scoping. The EIA working groups will also be used as a forum to discuss the approach to non-ecology surveys. The Inspectorate advised that where agreements have been reached with the working groups regarding the scope of the EIA, including any matters scoped out, the Applicant consider how such agreements are evidenced in the EIA SR to support any scoping out requests.

Gate 3 Guidance

The Applicant noted that RAPID had published Draft Gate 3 Guidance and that this identified that the environmental assessment be 'application ready' at Gate 3. The Applicant relayed their concerns that providing a draft application at Gate 3 may impact the submission date.

Any Other Business

The Inspectorate noted the scale of the project and underlined the importance of issues being resolved pre-application. The Applicant suggested Project Speed support could assist the development of the scheme in the pre-application stage. The Inspectorate advised that this request is made in writing.

The next meeting is proposed for early September, prior to the Applicant's EIA Scoping opinion request.

