



Meeting note

Project name	Lincolnshire Reservoir and Fens Reservoir
File reference	WA010003 and WA010004
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate (the 'Inspectorate')
Date	05 October 2022
Meeting with	Anglian Water (the 'Applicant')
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Inception 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.

Background to the Projects

The Applicant explained that the Fens Reservoir is led by a partnership between Cambridge Water and Anglian Water, whereas the Lincolnshire Reservoir¹ is promoted by Anglian Water alone. The Applicant outlined the core reasons behind the need for additional water resources in this area of England due to the dry climate, high population growth, concerns over scarcity of supply and regulatory changes driven by the Environment Agency.

The Applicant explained that it had assessed options such as water reuse and desalination and concluded that reservoirs were the most appropriate option. The Applicant explained that the reservoirs will also unlock greater opportunities for the region, such as leisure, tourism, and business opportunities.

The Applicant added that its draft Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) will be published shortly, which will underline the strategic need for the projects. The Applicant has submitted its draft WRMP to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Applicant explained that once Defra have reviewed the WRMP and provided feedback, the WRMP is due to go to public consultation in November 2022. The Inspectorate questioned whether the Applicant foresaw any delays to the WRMP. The Applicant explained

¹ For the purposes of the Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) process the project was initially referred to as the "South Lincolnshire Reservoir". Subsequently, the project has been introduced to stakeholders through consultation as the "Lincolnshire Reservoir".

that it considered the WRMP less likely to be challenged than other water companies' WRMPs.

Site selection process

The Applicant has been conducting a site selection process to identify the sites for the reservoirs and undertook a four-stage site selection process (involving initial screening, coarse screening, fine screening, and preferred site screening). The Applicant considered broad factors such as water availability, geology, and major roads in the surrounding area when determining potential sites. The Applicant explained that this process led to the identification of four potential sites for each project. The Applicant explained that it had engaged with stakeholders, water partnership groups and local planning authorities in a process called Multi Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), along with engaging with the Environmental Agency on flood risk management. The Applicant noted that final site selection will be announced in the week commencing 10 October 2022.

Project specifics- Fens Reservoir

The Applicant screened eighty-one potential sites down to four, before selecting the best performing site. The Applicant outlined some of the issues identified as part of the site selection process. These include the need for compulsory acquisition, flood risk and the sequential test, potential loss of loss best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV), and potential issues surrounding abstractions. The Applicant explained that a floating solar array could also form part of the proposed development. The Inspectorate queried whether the solar generation would constitute a separate additional Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The Applicant confirmed that the proposed developments constitute one NSIP each, with associated development such as the renewable energy generation and highway works below the NSIP thresholds contained in the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). The site has a water surface area of around five kilometres square and the main site is around seven hundred hectares in total.

The Inspectorate queried where the transfer pipeline connects to. The Applicant explained that the reservoir will take in surplus water from abstraction points to be agreed with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders and a pipeline will direct the water from the reservoir to a treatment plant to be treated and then transferred by underground pipeline to regional hubs. The Inspectorate asked the Applicant about the implication of recent case law for projects (Harris vs Environment Agency). The Applicant explained that the WRMP process provides a strategic approach to determining abstraction levels for public water supplies and the potential impacts of these activities and is working with the Environmental Agency and Natural England to manage these issues.

The Inspectorate noted that the loss of agricultural land might be a topic of interest during consultation. The Inspectorate queried whether the existing ground conditions would contain peat. The Applicant confirmed that they are looking to avoid areas containing peat and that a detailed land investigation will be undertaken, although research and assessment to date

demonstrates that the proposed location is appropriate both in terms of agricultural soils and peat..

In respect of water quality and habitats, it was suggested that derogations under the Water Framework Directive might be required in respect of the Proposed Development, but this would be confirmed through further assessments.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to engage in conversations regarding compensatory measures with landowners as soon as possible, as this can often be a topic of significant discussion during Examinations of NSIPs.

Project specifics - Lincolnshire Reservoir

The Applicant explained that it has followed a similar process of site selection for the Lincolnshire Reservoir. The Applicant explained that this proposed development may also involve the compulsory acquisition of homes and farmland and could require the loss of BMV grade 2 and 3 agricultural lands. The Applicant explained that the Crown Estate also occupies land it may need to acquire. The Applicant explained that the project will require a non-NSIP power cable diversion and that this is currently under discussion with UK Power Networks. The Applicant explained that there is a scheduled monument at Thorpe Latimer that could be subject to settings effects, although these were assessed at this initial stage as giving to be less than substantial harm, with further assessment to take place as the design evolves.

The Inspectorate noted that developments with large footprints have potential to impact on ground nesting birds at a regional scale and asked whether this was being considered. The Applicant confirmed that this has been considered and will be further assessed.

The Applicant indicated that EIA scoping would take place once the project design and layout had evolved further, taking account of the Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 7 and its guidance on the timing of scoping and design maturity.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Applicant has carried out intensive stakeholder engagement through the site selection process including with the relevant local planning authorities. Further technical engagement with stakeholders will take place as the project advisory teams are contracted. A good working relationship with the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) has been established although Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) had not yet been established. The Applicant intends to have a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with multiple LPAs in place early in 2023. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to continue trying to establish dialogue with stakeholders.

The Applicant explained that it had begun engagement with landowners on 5 September 2022 and will commence a ten-week public consultation from the 12 October to 21 December 2022, along with conducting in person hubs and pop-up events in areas of high footfall and established a 5km consultation zone around each reservoir. The Inspectorate asked if the Applicant had discussed the Statements of Community Consultation with the LPAs. The Applicant noted that it had consulted with LPAs who were content with the approach to consultation so far.

The Applicant outlined the relationship between the WRMP, DCO and the Regulator's Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) Gated regulatory process. The Applicant explained that it will be submitting its Gate 2 submission to RAPID shortly.

Project Design

The Applicant explained that it is using National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) design principles to underpin the development of its design proposals. Specialist architectural, landscape architecture and design professionals are guiding this process, in alignment with emerging water industry guidance.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate agreed with the Applicant that it would be helpful to have a meeting in the new year after the consultation report has been completed.
- The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to have additional meetings with the Inspectorate in advance of the scoping submission, which will be helpful to have a greater idea on what the content will look like.