



Meeting note

Project name	Teddington Direct River Abstraction; and; Southeast Strategic Reservoir Option
File reference	WA020002 and WA010005
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	23 October 2023
Meeting with	Thames Water
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.

The Applicant provided context around the plans for publicity for both projects, and the Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months where desirable, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24)

The Applicant gave an overview of the Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24), the statutory strategic plan which sets out how Thames Water plans to achieve a secure supply of water for customers and a protected and enhanced environment for the next 50 years. The final draft of the plan was published at the end of August 2023 and will be subject to approval by the relevant Secretary of State.

The Applicant detailed the preferred Strategic Resource Options set out in the WRMP24 including their progress to date through the Ofwat RAPID regulatory process.

London Water Recycling – Teddington Direct River Abstraction (DRA)

The Applicant discussed the Teddington Direct River Abstraction (DRA) project, a 'Drought Scheme' producing up to 75 ML of water per day in drought conditions. The proposed scheme is designed to be only operational seasonally when water levels of the river Thames and Thames Water reservoirs fall below a defined threshold. The project entails abstracting water from the lower River Thames which is transferred via the existing Thames Lee Tunnel from Hampton to the Lockwood Reservoir in the Lee Valley. An equivalent value of recycled water would then be replaced back into the Thames via a new proposed 4.5-5km tunnel.

The proposed tunnel will be constructed using pipejacking techniques whilst being 20/30m below ground. At every kilometre, intermediary shafts are proposed to be constructed to allow for maintenance.

The project sits in three Local Authorities (LA) consisting of Hounslow, Richmond, and Kingston. Public consultation has started and will run for 11 weeks. Key issues that have been identified about the project are the intake and outtake aspects and the route corridor for the pipeline. The Applicant has presented the multiple routes that were considered and evaluated throughout the design process in consultation.

The Proposed Development does not automatically qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) as it doesn't meet two of the criteria in section (s)28 of the PA2008. The Applicant detailed its considerations of the project as a NSIP and it intends to submit a s35 application to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in November 2023.

If the proposed development is granted a s35 direction, the Applicant aims to submit an EIA Scoping Report to the Inspectorate in Spring 2024, with Statutory consultation planned for late 2024 or early 2025. The Development Consent Order (DCO) application is targeted for submission in early 2026. The Inspectorate advised that design options are refined as far as possible in the Scoping Report and to think carefully about timings of consultation.

Southeast Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO)

The Applicant detailed the SESRO project, which would be the second largest reservoir in England at 150 Mm³. The Proposed Development has a railway located to the south, the A34 and the river Ock to the north and settlements to the west and east.

The proposed reservoir is non-impounding with an embankment which will be higher on the northern side and lower on the southern side. The project sits within views to/from the North Wessex Downs Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) which is elevated circa 140m higher to the south of the site. The Applicant confirmed that the AONB has been a significant factor in designing the site layout.

Water will be pumped out of the river Thames via underground tunnel and stored in the reservoir until it is needed, at which time it will be released back into the river through the same tunnel via hydro turbines for energy recovery. The reservoir will serve Thames Water, Southern Water and Affinity Water.

The Applicant proposes to utilise the local railway to transport multiple loads of material per day during construction. There are hopes that the project becomes an amenity for the local area and provide access to the public for recreational use.

The Applicant is considering plans to ensure that water could be drawn down quickly if required in an emergency. As the reservoir would be built partially on the river Ock floodplain, a replacement floodplain will be created on site.

Currently, information sharing activities and site investigations are underway. The Applicant hopes to submit a Scoping Report to the Inspectorate in 2024 with an aim to submit the DCO application in Q3 2026.

Interfaces of other Proposed Schemes

The Applicant detailed other schemes that interface with SESRO: Thames to Southern Transfer SRO and Swindon and Oxfordshire Water Supply Zone (SWOX).

The Applicant will discuss interfaces with other schemes and how they address them in their DCO in subsequent meetings as this is still under consideration. The Inspectorate advised to clarify what is included in the DCO well in advance of the Statutory consultation and the Applicant confirmed they are hoping to understand this further by the end of 2023, so it is clear during any forthcoming consultation for SESRO.

Open Discussion

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant is seeking to agree environmental survey methodologies with the statutory bodies and advised to seek this agreement before the Statutory Consultation for both projects. Regarding Teddington DRA, the Applicant informed that they are consulting on the methodology followed to appraise the 24 potential sites for development. They are involved in technical engagement with the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE) and are in communication with Historic England (HE) and the National Trust regarding the historic environment.

The Inspectorate emphasised the need for timely and meaningful engagement with statutory consultees. The Inspectorate also noted that site visits by Inspectorate staff are often helpful in advance of any requests for scoping opinions for environmental statements.

The Applicant intends to discuss options with landowners ahead of time but expect that they may need to utilise their compulsory acquisition (CA) powers for both projects. However, permanent land take is expected to be less for Teddington DRA and therefore should involve less CA.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate will organise separate project update meetings for each project in December.
- The Inspectorate will arrange a Project Team for future correspondence with the Applicant.
- The Inspectorate will send the Applicant the required documentation to establish a project webpage for each proposed development on the National Infrastructure (NI) website.