

Appendix 1

Overarching Response to the Fens Reservoir Consultation – May to August 2024

Purpose / Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on proposals being developed by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water to build a new large reservoir (a little smaller than Grafham Water) in an area north of Chatteris and east of the A141 and set out a range of key issues and opportunities that the Council has commented on in its response to the latest phase of public engagement on the proposal. See Appendix 2.

Key Issues

The preferred site for the Fens Reservoir project was originally announced by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water (the applicants) in October 2022. Fenland District Council provided a response to the initial consultation at the time and has continued to be engaged in semi-regular discussions with the applicants and other key stakeholders to help further shape the proposals.

On the 30th May the applicants launched a second round of (non-statutory) public consultation which will close on the 9th August. A link to the consultation can be found here: [A proposed new reservoir in the Fens - Anglian Water - Fens Reservoir](#)

This phase two consultation revolves around three main elements: i) The design of the main site, ii) uses of land in the vicinity of the main site needed for environmental mitigation and enhancement, construction, and wider activities, and iii) the wider associated infrastructure required to enable the reservoir's operation.

The applicants intend to undertake one further (statutory) public consultation currently planned for 2025 prior to making an application to the Planning Inspectorate/Secretary of State to commence the formal Development Consent Order (DCO) process. The size of the reservoir is such that it is a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and is to be determined independently by the Planning Inspectorate rather than FDC's Planning Committee.

If approved and constructed, it is forecast that the reservoir will be operational by around 2036.

To date FDC has been broadly supportive of the proposals in principle but as more details emerge it is important that the Council continues to actively engage with the applicants to ensure that potential opportunities are maximised, and any potential impacts are minimised and properly mitigated.

As a result of how committee dates have fallen in relation to the reservoir consultation period, it has not been possible to present a report to committee. However, a draft detailed response has been prepared by Officers and shared with Senior Members. The detailed response, together with this report should be read alongside each other and are subject to agreement by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Flooding to enable the 9th of August deadline to be met.

Recommendations

That the Council's detailed response for the phase two consultation (see Appendix 2) is noted and agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Flooding to be submitted to Anglian Water and Cambridge Water to meet the consultation deadline.

BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The Fens Reservoir proposal is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) being developed by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water. The site being proposed for the reservoir is to the north of Chatteris - east of the A141, north of the Forty Foot (or Vermuyden's) Drain, west of the Sixteen Foot Drain and south of Block Fen Drove. The site is generally flat and open and contains several farm and other businesses and dwellings. This site was selected from over eighty possible locations in the region following a lengthy assessment procedure. The selection criteria included the nature of the underlying geology and construction costs but also a range of other matters such as potential benefits to local communities and the environment.

The need for a reservoir in this area is recognised in the Regional Water Resources Plan for Eastern England which was produced by Water Resources East to better understand and address the environmental and water resource needs of the region. In addition to a reservoir in the Fens, a new reservoir is also proposed in South Lincolnshire.

The Regional Water Resources Plan states that both reservoirs are needed to guarantee water supplies in the future considering projected population growth, future agricultural demand, and the need to ensure that the environment, including river ecological systems, are not adversely affected.

As mentioned previously Fenland District Council are not the decision maker for this proposal because the scale of the project means that it is classed as a NSIP. As a host authority there is a clear expectation that we will actively participate in the development of the proposal. To date we have formally responded to previous consultations (see links in Background Documents in main report) as well as participating in workshops/development meetings with the applicants and other key stakeholders.

Going forward it is important that the Council continues to actively engage throughout all stages of the process – from pre-submission to commencement - with the applicants and other key stakeholders to discuss/work through any issues raised by the proposal and wherever possible seek to maximise economic, social and environmental benefits. Several Technical Working Groups (TWGs) have also been established by the applicants for a range of stakeholders to see how best the various topics such as improved nature provision, health and well-being, and skills related employment and training can be fully realised and the impacts of the extensive construction phase successfully mitigated.

Engaging with NSIPs can be a very resource intensive process for a local authority. To avoid under-resourcing, or needing to cut services elsewhere in the Council we are seeking to negotiate a fair Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with the applicants – with a view to achieving full cost recovery of any costs related to engagement in relation to the development proposals.

Emerging Proposals for the Reservoir

The applicants are currently undertaking a second phase of pre-application (non-statutory) engagement. The purpose of the consultation is to gain feedback on the emerging design of the main reservoir site; early proposals for land in close proximity to the main reservoir site; proposals for associated water infrastructure; and other supporting information i.e. the project fact sheets that have been developed.

For the main site a vision and a set of eleven design principles have been developed by the proponents. These are generally supported in principle but as the reservoir represents an important and unique opportunity for place making an additional, overarching design principle is suggested to help ensure this can be delivered.

The applicants have highlighted that the design is an iterative process and are actively seeking the views of stakeholders and the public to inform development of a final scheme.

Officers have reviewed the consultation material and produced a full and comprehensive detailed response (see Appendix 2) which focuses on:

- The overall shape/form of the reservoir itself to ensure that the final design has greater resonance with local people but also provides enduring interest to attract visitors on a return basis and creates a sense of pride amongst local residents and businesses across the district.
- Ensuring the opportunities for active travel (walking, cycling, horse riding) to, from and around the reservoir are maximised.
- Maximising the long-term economic benefit of the reservoir for local businesses and communities.
- Maximising the economic benefit and minimising the economic risks of the construction phase of the reservoir. This will include securing apprenticeships within the various skills and trades required during the construction phase.
- The need to work in partnership with ourselves and County to identify essential improvements to the highway network to help facilitate the construction of the reservoir and ongoing trip generation once the reservoir is completed.

In addition, feedback is provided about the associated infrastructure required for the reservoir's operation which will be needed to collect raw water, process and clean it, and distribute it to a number of smaller service reservoirs for use in the region.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

FDC recognises that the reservoir proposal has the potential to transform parts of the district and bring forward a number of benefits. That said the Council regrets the permanent loss of homes and businesses that will result and will support efforts to ensure that owners and occupiers are compensated to a standard at least in line with the statutory requirements.

As a result, the Council continues to be supportive of the proposal in principle subject to details and mindful that the mechanisms for ensuring the full benefits are realised still need to be established.

It is therefore recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Flooding notes and agrees the report and progress to date as well as the areas of concern which are set out in detail in the Council's consultation response (Appendix 2).

Appendix 2

Detailed Response to the Fens Reservoir Consultation – May to August 2024

DRAFT - Fenland District Council feedback about the emerging Fens Reservoir proposal – Public Consultation - May to August 2024

Fenland District Council (FDC) welcomes the opportunity to provide detailed feedback to Anglian Water (AW) and Cambridge Water (CW) about the emerging Fens Reservoir proposal.

FDC recognises the need for a project such as this to support water supply provision in East Anglia as well as the positive impact it should have on unlocking future growth across the sub-region. However, it is important that the project responds positively to its setting, delivers tangible benefits to local communities and businesses, and does not place any additional stress on existing infrastructure.

If developed in the right way FDC believes that the Fens Reservoir proposal has the potential to act as a catalyst for transforming key areas within the district and encouraging more investment for new homes, supporting infrastructure and business floorspace.

In the Council's view, realising all the potential benefits will be key to the success of the project in both the medium and long term.

Design Principles – Place making

The Council supports many of the sentiments of the emerging design principles and welcomes a themed approach to the development of the reservoir. However, it would request that a design principle relating to place making be included along the following lines:

“In addition to its water supply function the reservoir will be designed to create a unique and stimulating place to provide health and wellbeing and educational benefits for local and regional communities where visitors will be keen to return and where they can enjoy an accessible, safe and nature-rich environment for leisure and recreation in perpetuity.”

Emerging Design

The Council's main aim is for the reservoir to be a vibrant, absorbing and interesting place which will attract return visitors on a regular basis and would request that this should form an additional over-arching design principle (as suggested above). The proposal provides a unique opportunity to create a place for people to enjoy nature, recreation and for well-being, in addition to a range of other multiple benefits such as water provision and environmental improvements.

The reservoir is a key opportunity for place making and its design and shape are crucial to ensure that this is provided.

Whilst the proposed ammonite design has been presented in an attractive way and includes many interesting elements such as the lagoon, wetland boardwalks and viewing tower, we are concerned that this will not fully exploit the opportunity for place making, nor be sufficiently stimulating or interesting, to attract return visitors on a regular basis.

FDC has previously advised that it would want to see a more natural form of development in the landscape rather than the generally uniform, artificial form suggested. To do this we consider that any design should include features such as peninsulas, bays, inlets etc to create interest and variety, and be a stimulating experience for people.

We consider that the broadly round, uniform shape of the ammonite will not achieve this objective and as such will be a wasted opportunity to fully exploit the reservoir's place-making potential. It is possible that due to its large scale and uniformity of shape that the reservoir will be seen simply in time as a 'giant washing up bowl' in the landscape which is something we would wish to avoid.

We have previously provided some alternative ideas as to how an interesting and stimulating place might be achieved by drawing on the design principles relating to the history of the area and in recognising and celebrating the close ties that people have had with water and the resources from the once natural fen landscape.

One example would be to focus on the historic struggle of local people, the 'Fen Tigers', who opposed the draining of the natural fenland for agriculture and utilise a design shape based on the face/head/body of a tiger. This would draw on historic episodes and likely have a greater resonance with local people. (The existing Fenland District Council coat of arms emblem includes two opposite facing tigers).

In adopting an alternative design, an attractive and stimulating place could be created throughout the main reservoir site with a wide variety of interesting features. This would have the benefits of more likely resonance with local people, stimulate the imagination and interest of people elsewhere, and provide many on-going financial and investment opportunities through telling the story of the struggle in the fens.

Many of the attractive design features such as the lagoon area, boardwalk and viewing tower could easily be replicated in an alternative design. We acknowledge concerns raised by the AW and CW team that 'dead water' should be avoided in any design but consider that engineering and design solutions could avoid this.

We would be very willing to work in detail with the AW & CW team to see how an alternative and workable design might be achieved.

Embankments

The Council acknowledges that the embankment heights are to be between 10 – 15 metres but with relatively shallow gradients and tree planting which will help reduce their impact on the landscape. The proposal to improve visual interest by distributing the landscape fill differently on the embankments will also assist and is welcome.

However, the proposed the uniformity of the ammonite shape of the reservoir will not assist in assimilating the embankments into the landscape. An alternative shape with a variety of features such as peninsulas, bays and inlets will provide greater opportunities for a variety of landforms and perspectives and help reduce the visual impact of the structure resulting in more successful integration into the landscape.

It should be borne in mind that views from the tops of the embankment away from the water body will be as important as those towards it. Key views of features such as Ely Cathedral, Whittlesey brickworks, Warboys, and church towers in Doddington, Wimblington, March and Chatteris should be provided and safeguarded.

Shelter and wind breaks are essential across the entire site to protect active travel users from prevailing winds and provide shade during the summer months. This will be particularly important along the crest.

Main Visitor Centre

FDC supports the provision of the main visitor centre in the north-western part of the site due to its proximity to Doddington and Wimblington, and approximate equi-distance from Chatteris and March which should allow for the possibility for a greater proportion of active travel trips. In addition, the Council recognises that this area is on higher ground resulting in less ground disturbance for construction and allowing more easily for additional planting, views over the reservoir, and associated recreational and visitor activities.

From previous feedback given we would expect the visitor centre to provide a wide range of facilities and activities including for community use and a heritage centre.

We also support the idea of replicating the historic deer park of the Bishop's Palace Scheduled Ancient Monument in this location.

However, we consider that the visitor experience and exploitation of the potential of this area could be improved by extending the red line of the reservoir site to the northwest (in the area between the A141 and Nixhill Road), not only to allow for these associated recreational facilities but also for easier transport opportunities, including access from the A141 and the full exploitation and use of existing Public Rights of Way routes.

Secondary and Tertiary Visitor Centres

The Council supports the provision of a secondary visitor hub to the south of the reservoir and sees this as providing facilities associated with watercraft activities in particular. In keeping with the principle of providing noisier activities to the west and quieter activities to the east of the site there would be benefits in locating this visitor hub further west. It is noted that a potential marina is to be provided in this location although this may come forward at a later stage. FDC would support such a facility in principle to help exploit the navigation opportunities of the Middle Level and surrounding river system and would seek measures to ensure that convenient active travel connections could be made to local facilities in Chatteris.

We also support the provision of a third and smaller visitor hub in the north-east quadrant on the east side of the reservoir accessed from the Sixteen Foot Bank which should include accessible toilets, car parking and simple catering facilities.

It is noted that two toilet facilities are proposed for the site but that one of these may be part of a later stage of development. To support inclusivity for users with disabilities, toilet facilities at all three visitor hub locations should be provided at the outset. This is essential to enable more people with particular medical or age related needs to visit and enjoy all that the site has to offer as soon as the reservoir becomes operational.

Car Parking

Car parking adjacent to the visitor hubs is supported and provision should be suitable for demand to discourage inappropriate parking elsewhere in the vicinity. An assessment of the predicted footfall that the site is expected to attract should be undertaken to determine the level of parking required for the site. All car parks should include disabled bays and in the main car park(s), provision for buses and coaches. Safe pedestrian routes must also be provided within each car park.

Active Travel

The reservoir provides great opportunities for active travel both within and close to the main water body and in connections to local settlements and beyond. It also has the potential to provide a range of shorter, circular routes. These are essential elements to ensure the success of the proposal and are especially important issues due to the severance of the main site from surrounding areas particularly caused by the busy A141 and A142 and the Forty Foot Drain.

Whilst alluded to in the consultation documents the proposed scheme is currently short of specific active travel measures which is disappointing.

Within the main site we consider it important that round reservoir routes are provided for all categories of active travel users (pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians) which are carefully designed to not conflict with each other.

All routes should be clearly signposted and permitted user groups clearly displayed to avoid confusion or conflict between different methods of travel. Route maps should be available online, in print and displayed on site to enable visitors to easily plan and navigate their visits. Suitable cycle parking should be provided at convenient locations and linked to access points for those who travel to the site by bicycle but may wish to explore on foot.

Wider Active Travel Connectivity

To improve walking, cycling and equestrian access to the site existing public rights of way linking to the site should be upgraded. New routes or connecting pathways should also be introduced to ensure walking and cycling access is possible from all directions (March, Manea, Chatteris, Doddington & Wimblington). To ensure all routes are publicly accessible in perpetuity (including within the main reservoir site), early engagement with

Cambridgeshire County Councils Rights of Way Team should be made regarding their inclusion on the Definitive Map.

It will be essential to provide safe and accessible crossing points of the A141, A142 and B1098 at all public rights of way and highway junctions. Engagement and advice should be sought from Cambridgeshire County Council Highways and Road Safety Teams regarding the type of crossings required for these locations.

The proposal should recognise the proximity of March to the reservoir (the proposed main visitor centre in the north-west would be approximately equi-distance from March and Chatteris). There is an existing ambition for a direct cycleway between March and Chatteris and this should be acknowledged in the proposal. A large element of this route could be provided within the reservoir site as a main spine with secondary routes from Doddington and Wimblington connecting to it.

For the A142 new crossings will be needed in several locations (including around Fenton Way as this is likely to be a main desire line), if active travel opportunities for Chatteris residents are to be fully exploited. Please also see the recommendations in the [Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy - Fenland District Council](#).

Two crossing points of the Forty Foot Drain are indicated on the masterplan and FDC consider that an additional active travel bridge needs to be provided further east at the junction of the Forty and Sixteen Foot drains. This would allow for safer and more convenience connections to the Forty Foot Drain PRoW with connections to the Ouse Washes, as well as providing a convenient circular recreational route.

The current proposal does not include an active travel route from Manea which is disappointing. FDC considers that such a route, whilst challenging, is possible but will require further dedicated effort to ensure its provision. This could also support multi-modal journeys from Manea Railway Station. FDC would want to see an ambition to provide such a route as part of the reservoir proposal even if delivery was subject to third party involvement. The existing bridge over the Sixteen Foot Drain at Honey Farm provides a good opportunity to access the reservoir site by active travel means.

The potential to provide longer distance active travel routes to settlements further afield such as Mepal, Sutton (and on to Ely) and Warboys should also form part of the ambition for the scheme even if elements may need to be provided by others.

Despite stated ambitions in the consultation documents there are a number of sizeable gaps in detailed measures as to how active travel opportunities will connect to nearby settlements which is of concern. This is especially the case where theoretical routes are provided over third party land. FDC officers would be happy and willing to work with AW and CW and Cambridgeshire County Council Highways and PRoW teams to ensure that these routes can be provided on the ground.

Vehicular Accesses

Appropriate traffic assessments and modelling must be undertaken to understand the impact of the proposed vehicle access points on the existing network. The detailed assessment regarding traffic impacts related to the site must include the number and location of access points. The assessment must also demonstrate that these proposed accesses meet the needs of the site and those seeking to access the reservoir. Congestion on the highway network as a result of the site, particularly on the A141 and A142, must be avoided. Early engagement with Cambridgeshire County Council Highways and Road Safety Teams is strongly recommended.

FDC acknowledges that the number and locations of vehicular access points will be determined to a large degree by the transport assessment work and the involvement of Cambridgeshire Highways colleagues. However, the Council would highlight there is a need to improve existing transport highway infrastructure for all highway users at the junctions of the A141/A142, New Road/A142 and the B1093/A141 and would request that these opportunities are factored into deliberations.

All vehicle access routes on to and through the site should include segregated walking and cycling provision to ensure the safety of all users and avoid prioritisation of motor vehicles over active travel modes.

Public and Community Transport

In addition to cars, the development also needs to ensure provision is made for other transport provision to the site, such as new scheduled bus services, demand responsive transport, or new community transport opportunities.

Support for the introduction of a new service or services to link with the neighbouring towns and villages should be provided as part of the development, particularly for Doddington, Wimblington, Manea, March and Chatteris. A new passenger transport service should also link with March and Manea railway stations to support multi modal journeys.

Provision for passenger transport services to enter and exit the site should also be provided to enable passengers to be set down close to the visitor centres. Suitable waiting facilities and timetable information displays should be incorporated in this provision.

Waterways Transport

Opportunities to support and encourage access to the site from the existing waterway network should be incorporated in the final design and provided at the outset. In addition to the proposed marina as part of the southern visitor hub, we would like to see proposals for an interim option such as basic, short stay moorings to be included in the initial works to ensure visiting craft can access the site from the Forty Foot watercourse. This will provide an alternative option for accessing the site which could relieve some demand on the local highway network.

Transport during Construction

The detailed traffic assessment requirements to understand the impact of the site on the existing highway must include the impact of construction traffic during the delivery phase of the project.

It is expected that significant highway upgrades will be required to accommodate the traffic demand this site will generate. We would expect these upgrades to be completed prior to construction of the site to accommodate road-based construction traffic during the delivery phase.

Through the construction phase, consideration should be given to the provision of a number of park and ride schemes for workers at key infrastructure/highway points, as an alternative to car parking at the site with all workers travelling independently to it. FDC acknowledges that this should be picked up in the Transport Assessment, but such park and ride schemes could assist in reducing pressure on the highway network and is therefore an important option to explore.

FDC supports proposals for the reuse of materials on site to reduce the volume of material shipped to or from the development. Wherever possible, we would like to see materials that do require shipping, moved by water or rail to reduce the impact of additional traffic on the highway network.

There are some excellent opportunities to support and encourage local enterprises such as bicycle or mobility aid hire on site as well as café/snack facilities. Whilst it is acknowledged that these businesses would likely require the involvement of third parties, FDC would like to see initial provision of premises for these types of endeavours included in the final design and delivered within the initial construction. This will enable businesses and independent ventures to come on board upon immediate completion of the site and reduce further disruption caused by numerous additional development phases.

Nature Provision

FDC supports the provision of more nature focussed areas along the Forty Foot and Sixteen Foot drains. This accords with Fenland's Interim Nature Recovery Strategy which is currently being used to inform the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) area. [Fenland Interim Nature Recovery Network Final - July 2023.pdf](#)

The Forty Foot Drain provides an important connection between the important designated nature sites of the Ouse Washes to the east and the Great Fen Project (in Huntingdonshire) to the west. The Fens Reservoir is

likely to form an important priority opportunity for the LNRS and land provided for nature abutting the adjacent Forty and Sixteen Foot drains will assist with the ambition of doubling nature within the CPCA area.

FDC welcomes this opportunity to make provision for more natural wetland fen habitats in this location as well as being able to store and preserve peat from the associated construction works.

The site also has the potential to be an important receiver and beneficiary of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits from future developments in the district which will assist with the Council's growth plans.

The proposed design shows that the eastern and parts of the southern side of the site will be focussed on undisturbed natural habitat with limited access for walking and cycling. This is welcome to support environment and nature conservation. However, some controlled, limited access through these areas would help with active travel connectivity and circular routes in and around the site which if carefully designed should not adversely impact wildlife, and we would want to see some routes provided.

Economic Development Opportunities south of the Forty Foot Drain

Previous iterations of the masterplan have indicated the potential to provide areas for businesses associated with the reservoir which also reflects the ambition in the emerging Draft Local Plan published for consultation in 2022. The Council would request that business opportunities in this location should not be discounted at this stage. It is possible that the location of a construction village with its associated infrastructure in the vicinity could be re-used following the reservoir's completion for employment purposes.

The Council considers that further assessment will be required for land uses south of the Forty Foot Drain following completion of the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) currently underway. FDC would welcome continuing dialogue with AW and CW to assess how best this area should be master planned following the EIA and HRA processes and how this might inform policies in the emerging local plan. As previously discussed, the re-configuration of the proposed main road network through this area could provide enhanced land use opportunities for nature, businesses, active travel, and the southern visitor hub.

Renewable Energy

FDC supports the ambition for the reservoir to be net zero in its operation. The Council supports the use of renewable energy modes for the reservoir's operation but remains concerned about the proposed installation of wind turbines to assist with renewable energy provision in the winter and given that alternative renewable energy sources may well become available prior to the reservoir's completion and first operation. Much more detailed evidence is required to offset our concerns about the potential adverse cumulative impact of turbines on the landscape, on bird populations and flight paths in this location, and on visual amenity both locally and further afield.

Recreation

FDC welcomes the range of recreational opportunities the reservoir could bring including new publicly accessible open space and water-based activities. We have previously provided details of the types of activities that we would wish to see on the site which fall into three main categories:

Water based activities:

Likely to develop and evolve in time e.g. windboard/sail-related, boating related, swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing etc.

Land related activities:

Walking, cycling, equestrian, bird watching, meditative etc, children and young people's outdoor play equipment and water splashes etc, 'Go Ape' type activities in newly created woodland areas.

Facilities:

Visitor centres (when completed), visitor facilities (during construction – with viewing areas), education and heritage centre, training and employment centre, hotel, camping, glamping, caravanning, wedding/community use venues, outdoor theatre/concert venue, marina, public art, pop-up refreshment kiosks.

Socio Economic Benefits

In socio-economic terms the reservoir has the potential to address a number of inter-related issues in the district which include a deficiency in public open space and poor health outcomes. The new recreational opportunities should bring health and well-being benefits for local people. New active travel and other highways infrastructure could be provided and/or improved. The construction and operational phase should provide new skills, training and employment opportunities. Educational programmes in schools and colleges should improve aspirations and understanding for careers in water management and other associated activities such as tourism. If delivered effectively the reservoir should provide a lasting legacy and a catalyst for further improvements and positive growth.

It will be important to maximise the economic benefits, and minimise the economic risks, during the construction phase of the reservoir. This will include securing apprenticeships within the various skills and trades required during the construction phase. FDC will seek to ensure through agreement with AW and CW that local people and businesses will benefit directly through, for example, job and supply chain opportunities arising from its construction.

Looking ahead to the operational phase it will be important for the area that the long-term economic benefits of the reservoir for Fenland communities and businesses are maximised.

Catalyst for Growth

FDC acknowledges that the Fens Reservoir has the potential to be a catalyst for growth and be truly transformational for the district. The Council will seek opportunities to ensure that this growth is positive to ensure Fenland becomes a go-to choice for people to live and work.

In addition to new housing, employment, recreation and tourism the reservoir provides opportunities to seek improved public transport infrastructure and connectivity with better means of accessing surrounding areas and major settlements. The Council will seek to work proactively with a range of stakeholders as well as AW and CW to explore how this might be achieved.

Through the emerging Local Plan, the Council will seek to incorporate policies which acknowledge the potential benefits of the reservoir, and how best these might be delivered to ensure positive growth for the district.

Loss of Dwellings and Businesses

The Council recognises that the reservoir development will result in the loss of a number of dwellings and businesses which is very much regretted. However, it welcomes efforts by AW and CW to bring forward a fair compensation scheme for those affected and will continue to support proposals which compensate people in at least as equitable way as that provided for through the normal statutory processes.

Associated Infrastructure

FDC acknowledges that a considerable amount of infrastructure away from the main site and including in neighbouring authorities will be required to enable its operation.

Upstream Supply – Raw water provision

The Council supports the continuing assessment of the sources of raw water identified to date. We would welcome the open transfer of water wherever possible to provide biodiversity and active travel opportunities and benefits.

We support the taking of water from the adjacent Middle Level system in principle as being the easiest and most practical option to utilise in the first instance.

We also support the extraction of water from the River Delph adjacent to the Ouse Washes in principle to help improve nature conservation during the periods when the Ouse Washes flood providing this satisfies the relevant regulations and assessments including EIA and HRA.

We have no objections in principle to water being taken from the River Nene near Peterborough and fed into the Middle Level system provided that the associated infrastructure does not adversely impact on ecological, heritage or other important assets.

It is acknowledged that another potential source at Earith on the River Ouse has been identified. We have some concerns that this will effectively be relying on the same water source as the River Delph as with this option they will both originate in close proximity from the River Ouse. We do though support the principle of utilising the same downstream distribution pipeline chamber for supplying water to the main reservoir site with this option.

For future proofing raw water supply and based on the uncertainties of the impact of a warming climate, we would suggest that a precautionary approach be taken, and AW and CW give consideration to the future potential of extracting water from the Great River Ouse near Denver Sluices. Due to being downstream of the confluences of a number of rivers (Rivers Wissey, Little Ouse, Lark, Cam and Soham Lode) the potential supply at this point is likely to be one of the highest in the region. To provide for this, the downstream supply pipeline to the Bexwell service reservoir could be utilised by incorporating upstream pipework within the pipe 'chamber' which could be brought into operation if needed. This would allow for a guaranteed supply to be available sometime in the future without the need for major infrastructure intervention.

Water Treatment Works

FDC supports the provision in principle of the Water Treatment Works (WTW) on land south of the Forty Foot Drain at New Road given that essential infrastructure such as this needs to be located in Flood Zone 1 (low risk) areas, but subject to detailed considerations of design, visual amenity and access. The proposed site is on higher ground relative to surrounding land and any design needs to fully respect and relate to this relatively quiet, rural setting.

Downstream Supply – Clean water distribution

FDC acknowledges that the water from the reservoir is primarily proposed to supply the East Anglian and Cambridge regions.

However, we also consider that the three proposed supply routes to Downham Market, Bluntisham and Cambridge, could provide opportunities to distribute water more locally with branches coming off the main pipeline routes to directly supply local (new or existing) farm reservoirs where such a need arises. This would enable local farmers in the vicinity of the supply routes to benefit directly from the reservoir. It is acknowledged that raw rather than cleaned water would normally be used for irrigation purposes. The reservoir project should therefore consider how raw water might be taken directly from the reservoir and distributed in separate pipes to local farms through utilising the proposed network routes.

Subject to further assessment to ensure that heritage, nature and any other important assets are not adversely affected, the Council supports the provision in principle of the distribution of clean water to the service reservoirs at Bexwell near Downham Market, Bluntisham and Madingley near Cambridge, acknowledging that the latter falls within the Green Belt where strict planning regulations exist.

As mentioned earlier the Council would support the provision in principle of a dual (or treble) use of the pipework 'chambers' (upstream, downstream and agricultural pipes) in appropriate circumstances to reduce costs and the need for future interventions.

It may also be possible that the three new service reservoirs could provide opportunities for local recreation and access and these possibilities should be explored for all three sites.

Emergency Drawdown

The Council supports the use of the Sixteen Foot Drain in principle in the acknowledged unlikely event of the reservoir needing to be emptied in an emergency. As previously advised any requirements to improve this drain should factor in opportunities to improve the adjacent Sixteen Foot Bank highway and provide active travel infrastructure.

Delivering the Reservoir

FDC acknowledges that AW and CW will not be able to provide all the wider additional benefits that the reservoir has the potential to bring on their own. However, we would seek to have as many of the basic building blocks for the necessary infrastructure in place at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the benefits can be provided at the outset.

It would be very helpful to have more clarity about the elements that AW and CW consider they will be delivering and those elements they will be wanting to leave to others. The earlier all of the elements are identified and agreed on, the easier it will be to engage with third parties to see what alternative methods of funding and delivery there might be. Developing an early iterative Delivery Plan to be shared with stakeholders is likely to assist with this process.

FDC is also keen to understand the intended red boundary of the site to be submitted for the Development Consent Order (DCO) application to understand the full implications of what is being proposed. We would hope that AW and CW would be in a position to share early options with us, Cambridgeshire County Council and other stakeholders as soon as possible.

Future Engagement

As a key stakeholder FDC has welcomed engagement with the project to date whether through the Fens Water Partnership (FWP), Technical Working Groups (TWG), one to one meetings as a host authority, or Members' seminars. The Council continues to be very keen to work with AW and CW to ensure that the maximum benefits of the reservoir for the district are realised. As the process has now reached the stage where more detailed proposals are beginning to emerge, we would request that more regular engagement happens with Cambridgeshire County Council and ourselves to ensure our views are factored in at the earliest opportunity.

FDC welcomes AW and CW's proposal for a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) to be in place. The project has significant cost implications for this authority in terms of officer time such as attending meetings and considering and responding to consultations and informal proposals. The PPA will be a welcome way of recovering some of the costs whilst retaining the Council's independence when considering proposals. We will be seeking to discuss details of our preferred format for a PPA with AW and CW in the near future.