

HAVANT THICKET – RESERVOIR PROPOSALS

DEPUTATION TO MEETING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE – 3 JUNE 2021

1. This deputation is produced on behalf of Borrow Investments Ltd (Borrow) in response to the application by Portsmouth Water for reservoir proposals at Havant Thicket. Borrow own land immediately to the north of the application site, known as Land East of Horndean (LEOH). The northern part of LEOH is subject of an outline planning permission for a large mixed use development granted by East Hampshire District Council in February 2016 and a more recent 'resolution to grant permission' in June 2020. The southern part of the LEOH adjoins the reservoir application site.
2. As adjoining landowner, Borrow has had a number of discussions with Portsmouth Water in relation to the reservoir proposals. To some extent these discussions have been positive, but there are a number of significant matters which remain outstanding and which continue to be of concern.
3. The proposed northern access will lead to the loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland. Any compensation will not outweigh the significant harm.
4. Strong concerns about the loss of ancient woodland arising from the proposed northern access is shared by a number of other consultees, notably Natural England, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and CPRE Hampshire. Particularly relevant is the view of Natural England (see letters dated 19 December 2020 and 22 April 2021) that the local planning authority need to be satisfied 'that there are no alternative access road design options that would result in less damage to the loss of ancient woodland' and that 'this issue needs to be fully explored with key landowners.' On this point, an alternative option for the northern access route is available through the Borrow land to the north, approximately 100m north of the proposed access.
5. The principal benefit of the alternative option through the Borrow land is that it does not involve the loss of ancient woodland. Plus it is known that this alternative access point is suitable in highways and transport terms, as confirmed by Portsmouth Water's own transport consultants back in March 2019. Indeed, the consultants concluded that the alternative access was to be preferred. Borrow is aware of the consideration of access options, as set out in the Environmental Statement (see Volume 4, Appendix A13/A13.1, Appendix C). However, Borrow is concerned that this assessment does not give appropriate weight to the loss of ancient woodland nor to other constraints as explained further below. Accordingly, Borrow question whether the Environmental Statement is a fair and reasonable means of judging the respective merits of the access routes.
6. In any event, there exists constraints in relation to the proposed northern access point as currently proposed, which may have a bearing on implementation and timing. First, the proposed northern access route runs through land that is subject of a restrictive covenant. Secondly, a small parcel of land will need to be acquired from Borrow so as to provide sufficient visibility splays for the proposed access. These constraints are not recognised in the Environmental Statement assessment of alternative access points.
7. In summary, a number of important consultees have requested that the Councils explore the possibility of an alternative northern access, so as to avoid the loss of ancient woodland. An alternative access is available on land immediately to the north, which avoids the loss of ancient woodland and which is suitable in transport and highways terms.

1 June 2021

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