

Deputation Submitted by Ms Schwager

Re: Planning Permission for Havant Reservoir APP/20/00990

The theme of last week's Mental Health Awareness week was nature. Research by the Mental Health Foundation into the impact of the pandemic on UK residents showed how going for walks outside was one of the top coping strategies while 45% of respondents cited being in green spaces as vital for their mental health¹. When plans for the Havant Reservoir have been reported I have frequently seen a claim that the development will provide local residents with a safe green space to visit. We already have this at the proposed site which includes nearly 14 hectares of ancient woodland defined as irreplaceable by the Government. It is unfortunate that photographs are not allowed as part of deputations because the scenery we are lucky enough to have on our doorsteps is stunning, from the tree-lined walk along The Avenue down to the Second Lake (both important parts of Staunton's history) to the views across the fields including sightings of wildlife. I hope that during the site visit the councillors took the opportunity to walk through the trees, listen to the birdsong and gain an understanding of how important this site is to local residents, many of whom have been enjoying this countryside since childhood. Besides providing vital access to the countryside for us, this site provides habitat to wildlife including rare and endangered species – we have more species of bats here than are found at the New Forest and the potential to recognise Havant Thicket and the surrounding countryside as a nature reserve would both greatly benefit the environment, provide the Borough with a tourist attraction and could help regenerate the area.

Instead, however, Portsmouth Water has submitted an application which will destroy our green space and use the site as a raw water storage area. According to OFWAT, who are overseeing the agreement between Portsmouth Water and Southern Water, Portsmouth Water already has a water surplus which, without a reservoir in place, enables it to supply Southern Water with up to 30m litres of water a day. This development will enable them to increase this supply to 60 million litres of water a day. To quote from a consultation document dated February 2021² *“Portsmouth Water is building the Havant Thicket reservoir for the benefit of Southern Water's customers and Southern Water's customers will be paying for the reservoir. It is important to protect Portsmouth Water's customers from having to pay for a reservoir that they do not need”* This makes it clear - water provided by this reservoir, which will cause years of disruption to local residents (including hundreds of HGVs per day and noisy construction work beginning at 6am) and change our countryside forever, is not needed in our region.

¹ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week/why-nature>

² <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/s13-Havant-Thicket-Feb-2021.pdf>

Besides the impact on the environment, wildlife, and local residents there are other important considerations. According to government guidelinesⁱⁱⁱ landowners who are considering applying for planning permission to build a reservoir on their fields are advised to avoid sites close to residential areas on safety grounds. The proposed site for Havant reservoir borders The Warren - a densely populated part of the borough - and also has a primary school in close proximity. This raises concerns over safety during the construction of the reservoir, which will involve digging a massive crater a mile long and half a mile wide with a depth of up to 18 metres and also once it is filled with 8.7 billion litres of water. Preventing children and young people from entering the construction site, particularly at night, will be a huge challenge. It is not unreasonable to predict that, during hot summer months, people will attempt to swim in the reservoir despite safety warnings. Reservoirs are particularly hazardous due to the coldness of the water – according to the United Utilities *Don't Let Them Go In* safety campaign, cold-water shock can kill even the strongest swimmer in just 60 seconds.^{iv}

If it is not considered safe for farmers and landowners to construct reservoirs close to residential areas then it cannot be safe for Portsmouth Water to do so.

Hilary Schwager
Local Resident

ⁱⁱⁱ www.gov.uk *Guidance - Planning, designing and building water storage reservoirs :A guide to planning, designing, constructing and commissioning a water storage reservoir May 2008*

^{iv} www.waterpowermagazine.com *Beautiful but deadly – public safety at reservoirs 7 April 2020*